

2 CORINTHIANS

Chapters 1-5

*“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,
hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge
of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

*But we have this treasure in earthen vessels,
that the excellency of the power may be of God,
and not of us.” — 4:6-7*

Chapters 8-9

THE JERUSALEM POOR FUND

*“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart,
so let him give; not grudgingly or of necessity:
for God loveth a cheerful giver.” — 9:7*

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PREFACE

The first portion of these notes was written while Bro. Ron Abel was in Australia in 1971. Their substance was delivered at the Rathmines Bible School in August of that year and the notes were in fact prepared under great pressure, for the use of those at the Bible School.

The second section is upon chapters eight and nine in which Paul writes at length on the subject of the collection he instigated in the Gentile ecclesias for the poor saints of Jerusalem. "For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things," writes Paul on the same subject to the Romans (15:27). It was a grand scheme of a great spiritual mind. There were two basic peoples in the House of God. The Jewish minority were once the sole custodians of the oracles of God. They were brought up in families of strict discipline, with customs that bore the impress of Divine principles and a proud national heritage based originally upon the covenants God made with their fathers. The Gentile world on the other hand, was profligate; they gloried in man, worshipped a pantheon of fictitious gods and mingled their sensual desires with their abominable idolatry. How could Jews, even in Christ, feel free to join in fellowship with their Gentile brethren and sisters! It was a great challenge and even when great steps of progress had been made the underlying prejudices often caused serious disunity. Peter's behaviour in Antioch on the occasion of the visit of several brethren from James in Jerusalem, portrays in a remarkable way how even informed and notable 'pillars' could collapse under the pressure. Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation (Galatians 2:11-13).

This was a problem throughout the ecclesial world and it was to be expected that Paul would work hard to prevent the rebuilding of a "middle wall of partition". His was a grand scheme planned and acted upon in the faith of Jesus Christ who died for all, both Jew and Gentile.

We would be hard of heart if we cannot see the need for such a spirit today. There are lines of fracture developing in the Brotherhood today and there is no question that both the liberty and ruthless materialism of the world are working their effects upon the hearts and minds of many. "Love waxes cold and faith grows dim", yet in the midst of these pressures we must both **preserve the heritage and save the wandering sheep**. Great courage, strength of resolution and unyielding love are required by the ecclesial shepherds.

The second epistle of Paul to the Corinthians is a wonderful aid to the development of these qualities.

The following words are inscribed in the first copy produced in 1971:

"May it please the great God whom we serve to remember us for good, that in the age to come we might 'renew our strength and mount up with wings as eagles, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint'."—R.A. 1971.

Even so!

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FOREWORD

The Corinthians had all too much in common with the Laodiceans, (Rev. 3:14-18). Paul wrote: "Now ye are full, now ye are rich [and ironically] ye have reigned as kings without us . . ." (1 Cor. 4:8). Mistakenly, their comparisons were made one with the other (2 Cor. 10:12)—and were "without understanding".

The transition from paganism to "epignosis" was slow and as the problems indicate—often retrogressive. There was a seeping diffusion of the world through the thin, and often, it seems, porous membrane separating the ecclesia from the world. As an ecclesia, Corinth stood in marked contrast to the spirituality and sympathy for Paul, evident in the Macedonian ecclesias to the north. There is little by way of commendation recorded about the ecclesia as a whole. Even the initial enthusiasm for the Jerusalem Poor Fund caused Paul embarrassment when he boasted of this enthusiasm to the Macedonians, only to find that his credentials were under question and the Fund had lapsed into disfavour (2 Cor. 9:1-5).

The Corinthian Ecclesia presented an almost impossible task for the Apostle to the Gentiles—a "care" which must have broken his heart on many occasions. It was God's work, however, and Paul was only an under-rower, and although the master builder, it was still God's building. It was God who was fashioning from raw paganism, jewels worthy of eternal splendour.

Year by year the evident signs of ageing make us painfully aware that our "outer vessel" is wasting away, but it is not always so apparent that one can be "dead" while he "lives" unless the "inner man" is "renewed daily". The same deception which was successfully exercised by King "Sin" at Laodicea and Corinth has, no doubt, his contemporary converts as well in this wicked and decadent age. May this epistle encourage you to "quit yourself like men" with a willingness to "spend and be spent" in the good work of feeding the flock and casting the gospel nets.

With these notes, I say "farewell" to my beloved in Australia. It is a most insignificant return to the host of faithful co-workers in a wide area of projects for Canada, the West Indies, and South America. May their reward, be yours—a kindled spirit by the power of the apostolic example "to spread the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere"—even to "the regions beyond"!

RON ABEL,

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

POPULATION

Corinth was the capital of the Roman province of Achaia, a centre of government and commerce. It was located on the great trade route between Rome, Ephesus and Syrian Antioch. Ships would dock at Cenchrea (on the eastern side of the Isthmus) and passengers in transit would cross overland 3½ miles to board another ship at Lechaeum. The maritime interests of the Corinthians were further necessitated by the poor agriculture of the area. The low ground of the Isthmus was poor and stony, and the populace turned to the traffic of the sea for its livelihood.

The following comprised the population:

1. JEWS

There were a considerable number of Jews at Corinth, no doubt engaged in the commerce of the city. There had also been some Jewish emigration from Rome as the result of the edict of Claudius, (Acts 18:2).¹ When Paul arrived at Corinth, he went to the synagogue, and commenced to argue, and reasoned that the Messiah was Jesus (Acts 18:4).

The Jews found the doctrine of the atonement a stone of stumbling, (I Cor. 1:23), and their violent reaction to Paul's preaching in the synagogue resulted in Paul leaving the synagogue to continue his preaching next door (Acts 18:6-8). The Jews then unsuccessfully sought the power of Rome vested in Gallio (the Proconsul of Achaia) to curtail his preaching (Acts 18:11-16).

2. GREEKS

(a) **Rhetoric.** Although Achaia was conquered by the Roman Mummius (146 B.C.), Greek culture flourished. The philosophies of Plato, Aristotle and Socrates were reflected in the Grecian love for rhetoric, argument² and oratory. The preoccupation with "ginosko" (knowing by reasoning) was

¹Later (A.D. 66-67), 6,000 Jews were captured by Vespasian's troops as he moved through the north of Galilee. These were taken as slaves to construct the Corinthian Canal. See Werner Keller, *The Bible as History*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1956), p.380.

²The "syllogism" was formally set out by Aristotle, and now is an accepted and well used form of argument. If an opponent admits the truth of the premises, then the conclusion inescapably follows. Job's three friends used the syllogism with an erroneous major premise. They argued as follows:

All suffering is the result of sin	(major premise)
Job is a sufferer	(minor premise)
<hr/>	
therefore, Job is a sinner.	(conclusion)

The Socratic method of argument—using well-chosen questions to lead one's opponent inescapably to the desired conclusion, was well mastered by Robert Roberts as indicated in *The Trial*, and his printed debates with Hine and Bradlaugh.

evidenced in the ecclesia by those who denied the resurrection of the body. (1 Cor. 15:35, 12).*

- (b) **Ethics.** In general the ethical system of the Greeks assumed that “to know” was to do. It was diametrically opposed to what the Law of Moses revealed, and the personal experience of the Apostle Paul: “For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Rom. 7:19). At Athens, Paul’s open-air speaking in the market place resulted in a confrontation with the Stoics and Epicureans (Acts 17:17-18). The former were rigidly ascetic, and the latter hedonistic, maximising pleasure as the ultimate good in life. These philosophers misunderstood the doctrine of the resurrection and the preaching about Jesus, thinking that Paul was a “setter forth of strange gods”.³

Paul was regarded by the supercilious Greeks of Athens as a mere “babblers” (Acts 17:18)—a disparaging word implying he was a mere “seed-picker”—a plagiarist and not an original thinker.

3. OTHERS

Many other nationalities were represented in the floating population of this city. Julius Caesar made Corinth a Roman colony in 44 B.C. and transported 200,000 freedmen to Corinth. They were descendants of the colonists who lived as a local aristocracy.

Who would have thought that Corinth with all its vice, wickedness and philosophies would have afforded fertile soil for the growth of the gospel? The choice, however, was not human, but Divine: “Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.” (Acts 18:9-10).

*Plato is known for his doctrine of the “immortality of the soul” taught in the Timaeus. The tripartite “nature of man” was mirrored, Plato taught, in the three segments of society:

soul	philosophers	—engaged in reasoning
spirit	warriors	—volatile natures
body	artisans	—moved by bodily passions

³Their reaction may be explained by the fact that “anastasis” the Greek word for “resurrection” is also the name of a female, and “Jesus” the name of a male, hence the association with the male and female “divinities” of Grecian polytheism.

COMPOSITION OF THE CORINTHIAN ECCLESIA

The ecclesia at Corinth was composed principally of Gentiles, (I Cor. 12:2) but there were Jewish converts as well (Acts 18:8). Many had Roman names, e.g., Crispus (Acts 18:8); Titius Justus (Acts 18:7 R.S.V.); Lucius, Tertius, Gaius, Quartus (Rom. 16:21-23).

RELIGION

1. **“PORNEIA”** (immorality). On top of the Acrocorinthus in Achaia (a huge rock formation 1800' above sea level) stood the temple of Aphrodite, dedicated to the worship of Venus. 1,000 priestesses were employed for the “porneia” of the temple. To “Corinthiniazesthai” (Corinthianise) meant to indulge in the immorality of the Corinthians. So dreadfully wicked was this society, so unabashed did its inhabitants grovel in immorality, that Paul said if “not to keep company with fornicators” meant fornicators in the world, it would require believers to go out of the world (I Cor. 5:9, 10). It was from Corinth that Paul wrote the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans—“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge; God gave them over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not convenient” (Rom. 1:28). The character of the society which pressed heavily on the ecclesia presented formidable problems for the Corinthian brethren. For example, some brethren were making a dichotomy between “the mind” and “the body” reminiscent of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy. It was argued that to engage in “porneia” (immorality) was of no consequence since it was merely the satisfying of a natural body appetite like hunger, (I Cor. 6:13-20). To such exponents, Paul pointed out that the body was the Lord's and would be subject to a future resurrection.

2. MYSTERY CULTS

There were many mystery cults with secret initiation rites. To the Greek mind the “mystery” (revelation of the atonement) was unintellectual (I Cor. 1:28). A crucified Messiah who declared the righteousness of God by condemning “sin in the flesh” held neither wisdom nor power for the unenlightened Greek. Furthermore, how could one who had “no form nor comeliness” (Isa. 53:2), his “appearance so marred” that it was “beyond human semblance” (Isa. 52:14, R.S.V.), arouse their appreciation? The Greek championed the athlete with physique and physical prowess. To such, the preaching of a crucified Messiah was the height of folly (I Cor. 1:21-24).

The pressure of this environment on the Corinthian believers was reflected in the ecclesia, and hence the reasoning of I Cor. 1:3 showing that “the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God . . . The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain”, (I Cor. 3:19-20). Paul spoke “the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory” (I Cor. 2:7).

3. SOCIAL CLASS

—Mainly poor—“not many mighty, not many noble” (I Cor. 1:26). See also I Cor. 11:22 (probably these were slaves). Some whose social position receives mention (e.g. Erastus) must have had means. The cleavage between rich and poor in the ecclesia receives indictment from the Apostle (see I Cor. 11:22 A.V. mg.).

4. MALE/FEMALE RATIO

—The ecclesia may well have had a large number of female converts since many of the problems relate to sisters. Note e.g.: virgins—I Cor. 7:25; Spirit-gifts and the head-covering (I Cor. 11:5); the abuse of the Spirit-gifts and the prohibition against sisters speaking (I Cor. 14: esp. vs. 34-35).

FEATURES OF THIS EPISTLE

1. It is intensely autobiographical. More can be learned about Paul himself in this Epistle than in any of the others. For example, Paul was ship-wrecked three times and adrift at sea for a day and a night (11:25), but this information is not recorded in the “Acts of the Apostles”. (The ship-wreck which is recorded in Acts 27 occurred later).
2. It is a very subjective letter, written in a spirit of self-vindication. Many of the arguments of Paul’s detractors must be inferred on the basis of his replies. Often Paul appears to ironically quote the words of his detractors which requires a general “feel” for the Epistle as well as a sensitive reading so as not to make erroneous inferences.
3. The Epistle is coloured at almost every turn by Paul’s retorts to allegations of the Judaisers. For this reason a section is included presenting the position of the Judaiser.
4. There are marked contrasts between the First and Second Epistles to Corinth. Consider the following:

1ST COR.	2ND COR.
Structured —Paul answers questions presented by the ecclesia (e.g. 7:1).	Unstructured —complex, repetitive.
Variety of topics —factions, meats—idols; spirit-gifts, etc.	One topic —primarily Paul’s vindication.
Personal —but not autobiographical.	Autobiographical.

5. It is called the “2nd Epistle” but in fact, it is the “4th Epistle”. This is proven by the following:
 - (1) **EARLIER LETTER**—“I wrote unto you in an epistle” (I Cor. 5:9).

- (2) **1ST EPISTLE**—Written in answer to questions which had been asked, (e.g. “Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me” (1 Cor. 7:1).
- (3) **INTERMEDIATE—ADMONITORY LETTER**—“For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears” (2 Cor. 2:4; 7:12). The context indicates that this was not the 1st Epistle, but rather an admonitory letter reproving the ecclesia. It was carried by Titus.
- (4) **2ND EPISTLE**—Upon hearing of the Corinthian response to Titus’ “Admonitory Letter”, Paul sent the 2nd Epistle.

A RECONSTRUCTION OF THE JUDAISER’S POSITION

Unless a vivid reconstruction of the Judaiser’s argument is undertaken, much of the force and subtlety of the Epistles is lost. Large sections of Romans, Galatians, 2nd Corinthians and Hebrews are concerned with this problem, as are some of the other epistles (e.g. Philippians) and Acts of the Apostles. The plausibility of the Judaiser’s position is indicated by the temporary defection of Peter and Barnabas at Antioch (Gal. 2). The Jerusalem Conference was convened (Acts 15) to resolve the agitation which followed the Judaiser’s insistence; “Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law”, (Acts 15:24). It should be noted that although Paul narrowly escaped death at the hands of hostile Jews, (by whom Paul was regarded as a ‘turncoat’), the Judaising influence was caused primarily by converts in the Truth. (Cf. Acts 15:1, 5, 24; Gal. 2:4, 12). The following is an attempted reconstruction contrasting the Judaising position with that of the Truth.

JUDAISER’S POSITION	THE TRUTH
<p>1. The Law of Moses</p> <p>(a) The Law of Moses could confer life eternal for faithful obedience, (“the man that doeth it shall live”, Lev. 18:5; cf. Gal. 3:12).</p>	<p>“By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. 2:16; cf. Rom. 3:20).</p> <p>Faith, not law-keeping, is the basis of justification—“But that no man is justified by [the] law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, ‘the just shall live by faith’ ” (Gal. 3:11).</p> <p>Law brings cursing not justification. “For as many as are of [the] works of [the] law are under the curse: for it is written, ‘Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them’ ” (Gal. 3:10). Judaisers were, in fact, cursed by the very Law they tried to impose on others—it was a ministration of death (2 Cor. 3:7).</p>

<p>(b) The Law of Moses was eternal since given by God through Moses the great Mediator.</p>	<p>It was not eternal, but rather it was added because of transgression, until the seed should come (Gal. 3:19). It was a child-tutor (a schoolmaster) to bring men to the Messiah (Gal. 3:24), but when the heir becomes of age he no longer requires the tutor (Gal. 3:25). Observance of the Law of Moses cannot be essential for salvation since believers apart from obedience to the Law received the Spirit-gifts, thereby validating their standing before God (Gal. 3:5).</p>
<p>2. Circumcision (a) Commanded of Abraham's seed for ever (Gen. 17:13—"and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant").</p>	<p>Real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not physical, (Rom. 2:29). This is proven by the fact that Abraham was given the covenant before he was circumcised (Rom. 4:10).</p>
<p>(b) Jews are God's first-born people (Exod. 4:22; Dt. 14:1), children of Abraham. To them belong the privileges (Deut. 7:6-18; 14:2; Amos. 3:2). Therefore, Gentile converts wishing to share in these blessings must accept the token of the covenant—circumcision, (Gen. 17:11).</p>	<p>Abraham was justified by faith apart from works of law. This is proven by the fact that the Law of Moses was not given until 430 years later (Gal. 3:17). The very argument used to prove that Law observance is required for salvation would eliminate the firstborn, Abraham himself !! Pedigree (descent from Abraham) did not confer a perfect capability for law-keeping, therefore to claim one was Abraham's seed was ineffective in obtaining life eternal, since the law cursed all who did not continue in all things commanded by the law (Jas. 2:10). The promises relate to only one kind of seed, those demonstrating faith (Gal. 2:15). Therefore, the true heirs must be justified on the basis of faith as was Abraham.</p>
<p>3. Jesus Christ, the Messiah, was the embodiment of perfect law-keeping, therefore he earned life</p>	<p>The law had no power to confer life eternal on Christ since he was cursed by the Law (Gal. 3:13). Christ was</p>

eternal. As the champion of the seed of Abraham he set the example as to how others could be saved.

raised because the righteousness of God required it (Rom. 3:25, 26).

Jesus was the embodiment of the Law but not as the example of what sheer will-power can do. He was rather the supreme example of Divine strength made perfect in human weakness.

The Law taught (as a schoolmaster) what Christ demonstrated. The flesh profits nothing (Jn. 6:63). It revealed man's sinfulness "that every mouth might be stopped" (Rom. 3:19; 5:19, 20; 7:9-10). Jesus was heard in that he feared (Heb. 5:7).

THE ALLEGATIONS OF THE JUDAISERS AGAINST PAUL

1. **HIS APOSTLESHIP WAS SELF-ASSUMED** (2 Cor. 3:1). Unlike the real apostles (appointed by Christ), Paul was merely instructed in Jerusalem and commissioned by the 12 (rather than by Christ). Paul, therefore lacked apostolic authority, (which seriously called in question his gospel of Gentile liberty apart from Law-keeping).

Paul's reply:

- (a) He had seen Christ (I Cor. 15:8).
 - (b) His gospel came directly from Christ, and not from the other apostles (Gal. 1:1, 12, 16, 17). This fact is proven by the following:
 - i. He was preaching the gospel before he met the apostles, so his instruction did not come from them (Gal. 1:17).
 - ii. His first trip to Jerusalem was to see Peter (with whom he stayed for only 15 days). The only other apostle he saw was James (Gal. 1:18, 19).
 - iii. On his second visit to Jerusalem, he was not instructed to go there to be taught by the Apostles, but rather he went by revelation (Gal. 2:2).
 - iv. He was unknown to the Jerusalem ecclesia, so he did not receive his instruction from them (Gal. 1:22).
2. **HE WAS A VACILLATING OPPORTUNIST** who pretended to serve God but really served himself⁴ (2 Cor. 1:12, 17; Gal. 1:10).

⁴On the contrary Paul was prepared to make unimportant concessions to show that he was not opposed to the Law as such, and to advance the gospel. For example, Timothy was circumcised (Acts 16:3), because the principle of justification by the Law was not the issue, but Paul refused out of principle to circumcise Titus (Gal. 2:3-5). He even complied with the advice of James and the elders to shave the heads of four men which had a vow as proof that he "walked orderly, and kept the Law" (Act 21:20-28).

Paul's reply:

- (a) He flatly rejected the charge on the ground that if he was a man-pleaser he could not be the slave of Christ (Gal. 1:10). The fact that he was a convert from Judaism to the Truth was in itself proof that he was no mere man-pleaser (Gal. 1:12-15, 23, 24).
 - (b) He was prepared even to bring God as witness to vouch for his integrity of "holiness and godly sincerity" (2 Cor. 1:12-23).
 - (c) The Judaisers, not Paul, were the cowards. They desired to make a "good showing in the flesh . . . only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ" (Gal. 6:12, R.S.V.)
 - (d) He attacked them as enemies of the Truth — false brethren brought in, "who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage" (Gal. 2:4).
 - (e) He warned other ecclesias of their influence: "Beware of dogs, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit . . ." (Phil. 3:2, 3).
3. **HE HAD ADULTERATED THE TRUTH** by his teaching, "let us do evil that good may come"; "sin so that grace may abound" (Rom. 3:8, 6:15).⁵

Paul's reply:

It was a slanderous charge (Rom. 3:8), Paul taught the opposite—"God forbid!" (Rom. 6:2).

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST PAUL AT CORINTH

("Afflicted at every turn . . . fightings without, fears within")

It is useful to isolate the various charges against the Apostle which circulated at Corinth, and to note his replies. To do so, considerably assists the structuring of this personal and repetitive letter.

1. **INSINCERITY OF PURPOSE** (1:12-14; 10:2-4 cf. 5:11-12). Paul refutes this allegation on the basis of the following:
- (a) **The testimony of his own conscience**—He presents his conscience as bearing testimony in a law-court: "we behaved in the world, and still more toward you with holiness and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom" (1:12, R.S.V.)
 - (b) **His sufferings and affliction**—These he endured at every turn (4:8-12 cf. 4:1) which were incompatible with the charge of insincerity of purpose. He was "carrying in the body the death of Jesus" so that "the life of Jesus" was manifest in his mortal body.
 - (c) **His divine commission**—God had committed to him the "ministry of reconciliation" (5:19-20). God was making His appeal through the apostles. "For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word: but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ" (2:17).

⁵To preach salvation without the Law, was to the Jew, an invitation to licentiousness. Examples of such in the ecclesia (e.g. 2 Cor. 11:21) would be taken as proof by the Judaiser that Paul and his gospel were inadequate—the Law was required.

2. VACILLATION

- i. Fickle change of travel plans (1:17).
- ii. Capricious “yes—no” conduct (1:17).

Paul rejects these charges on the following grounds:

- (a) **His preaching** was neither capricious, nor vacillating. As messengers of Christ in whom the promises of God Himself are actualised, we will not be “yes-no” men in such trivia as travel plans.
- (b) **The reason for change of plans given**—“to spare” the Corinthians “I made up my mind not to make you another painful visit” (2:1, R.S.V.).

3. DOMINEERING (1:24; 10:8).

Threatened use of authority, Paul argued, was disciplinary in intention (10:8) and not designed to “lord it over your faith” (1:24, R.S.V.). He promised: “I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I will not spare them” (13:2, R.S.V.). As to whether Paul came with “love” or a “rod” (I Cor. 4:21) depended on *their* response, not his domineering predispositions.

4. LACKED APOSTOLIC CREDENTIALS—i.e. a letter of recommendation from the Jerusalem Ecclesia (3:1-3). Paul replied that he needed no letter! The fact that Corinthians had become converts to Christ was indicative of his credentials. *They* were letters sent from Christ and delivered by Paul himself—engraved with God’s Holy Spirit power!

5. EMBEZZLING ECCLESIAL FINANCES (7:2; 12:16, R.S.V.). It had been charged: “I was crafty, *you say*, and got the better of you by guile”. Paul replies with the following:

- (a) **He denies the charge ironically**: “For in what were you less favoured than the rest of the ecclesia, except that I myself did not burden you? Forgive me this wrong!” (2 Cor. 12:13).
- (b) **He wants *them* not their money**: “I seek not what is yours [i.e., money] but you . . . I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls” (2 Cor. 12:14, 15 R.S.V.). It is the *parents’* responsibility to lay up for their children. As their spiritual father Paul had begotten them, therefore he said, “I will gladly spend for you”.
- (c) **The same “spirit” was enacted by Titus** “We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one” (2 Cor. 7:2 R.S.V. cf. Acts 20:33-35). Paul had not embezzled funds through any of his assistants.

6. “TWO-FACED” INCONSISTENCY

- (a) “bold when absent—humble when present” (10:1).
- (b) “letters were weighty when absent, but bodily presence weak and speech ‘of no account’ when present” (10:9-10).

Paul’s rejoinder concedes the facts but shows that the interpretation placed upon the facts is faulty.

- (a) **He rejects the apparent inconsistency:** “Let such people understand that what we say by letter when absent, we do when present” (2 Cor. 10:11 R.S.V.)
 - (b) **He concedes this impression might be given.** “I write this while I am away from you, in order that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority which the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down” (2 Cor. 13:10, R.S.V.).
 - (c) **Even if unskilled in speaking, not in knowledge.** “Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not in knowledge; in every way we have made this plain to you in all things” (2 Cor. 11:6, R.S.V.).
 - (d) **Their appraisals are invalid—wrong criteria used:** “Not that we [i.e., apostles] venture to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding . . . for it is not the man who commends himself that is accepted, but the man whom the Lord commends” (2 Cor. 10: 12, 18, R.S.V.). Paul put no confidence in natural prowess, but rather in the Divine provision, “my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9, R.S.V.).
7. **HE WAS A PSEUDO-APOSTLE**—his apostleship and authority merely arrogated (12:1-12, 13:3 cf. 11:12-15). Paul replies by the following:
- (a) **Assails this faction and their leader**—(a “superlative apostle”). “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ” (11:13). “And no wonder, for even Satan [the chief adversary] disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is not strange if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds” (11:14, 15, R.S.V.)
 - (b) **Undermine them**—“And what I do, I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do” (11:12).
 - (c) **Copiously sets out his apostolic credentials.** “For I am not at all inferior to these superlative apostles, even though I am nothing. The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works” (12:12; see also 11:22-28).

CHRONOLOGY OF ACTS OF PAUL

A.D.		Roman Emperors Governors of Judea*	Acts
		14 Tiberius (Lk. 3:1-2)	
		26 Pontius Pilate* (Lk. 23:1-25)	
30	—Ascension of Jesus		1:6-11
	—Appointment of the seven		6:1-7
35	—Death of Stephen		7:54; 8:1
	—Conversion of Paul	36 Marcellus*	9:1-30
		37 Marullus*	
		Gaius (Caligula Acts 9:24, cf. 2 Cor. 11:32)	
40	—Ecclesia at Antioch		11:19-30
	—Execution of James imprisonment of Peter	41 Claudius (Acts 18:2) Herod Agrippa I* (Acts 12:1-23)	12:1-25
		44 Cuspius Fadus*	
45	—Paul's 1st Journey	46 Tiberius Alexander*	13:1-14:28
	—Galatians		
	—Council at Jerusalem	48 Ventidius Cumanus*	15:1-35 ⁶
50	Paul's 2nd Journey	52 Antonius Felix* (Acts 23:24,26,27)	15:36; 18:22*
	—1 Thess. & 2 Thess.	54 Nero (Acts 25:11-12)	Gallio proconsul
55	—3rd Journey		18:23; 21:17
	—1 Cor., Romans, 2 Cor., & Philipp.		
	—Paul's arrest in Jerusalem		21:27-36
60	—Paul's journey to Rome	59 Porcius Festus* (Acts 25, 26)	27:1-28:15
	—2 years there Coloss., Philem., Eph., & Philipp.	61 Albinus*	28:30-31
		64 Gessius Florus*	
65	—1 Tim., Titus, 2 Tim.		

⁶Gallio's proconsulship of Achaia (Acts 18:12-17) is known to be A.D. 51-2 because of the inscription found at Delphi in 1905. Also the expulsion of the Jews from Rome by Claudius (Acts 18:2) was probably in A.D. 49. When Paul arrived at Corinth, Aquila and Priscilla had recently arrived there from Italy because of Claudius' edict. See J. W. Packer, **The Acts of the Apostles: The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the N.E.B.**, (Cambridge, at the University Press, 1966), pp. 18, 19.

2 CORINTHIANS 1

COMFORT IN AFFLICTION

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

- 1:1-2 SALUTATION
 - Paul's apostolic standing affirmed
 - Timothy sends greetings
- 1:3-7 THANKSGIVING TO GOD
 - personal deliverance
 - comfort
- 1:8-11 DELIVERANCE FROM A RECENT PERIL
 - afflictions in Asia
- 1:12-14 APOLOGETIC SECTION COMMENCES—
 - Paul defends his integrity:
 - (a) Sincerity of purpose defended.
 - (b) Travel plan changes — not due to fickleness or vacillation.
- 1:15-17 (b) Travel plan changes — not due to fickleness or vacillation.
- 1:18-20 HIS MINISTRY AS MESSIAH'S DEPUTY TESTIFIES TO HIS PERSONAL INTEGRITY.
- 1:21-22 HIS IMMOVABILITY — DUE TO HIS DIVINE COMMISSION
- 1:23-24 CHANGE OF TRAVEL PLANS — THE REASON
 - Paul's desire to avoid another "painful visit" until the Corinthians put matters right in the ecclesia.

1-2 SALUTATION

1:1 *"Paul"* —

"Paul" means "little" (Yg)¹, (because he was short?) His Hebrew name was "Saul" (Acts 13:9), and his Gentile name "Paul".

"an apostle" —

"Apostle", Gk: "Apostolos", "one sent forth" (Yg); from "apo", "from", and "stello", to send". It is used in the following two ways:

(a) **SPECIFIC** — for the twelve. The twelve are distinguished from the "brethren" and the "elders". See Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23. The credentials of a true apostle were "signs, wonders and mighty deeds" (2 Cor. 12:12). Many religionists, such as the "Mormons" (who claim to have 12 apostles²) and the Apostolic Church (following the Pentecostal Movement), claim possession of the Holy Spirit gifts of I Cor. 12, but are unable to furnish proof of such. Apostles are listed first in the rank order of ecclesial offices (I Cor. 12:28). For those who claim modern possession of the Holy Spirit EXACTLY as it was given in the first century, it is appropriate to ask for the credentials of the apostles seeing that these have priority over gifts of healing and tongue speaking. Apostles such as Peter and Paul could do the following:

- (a) Raise the dead (Acts 9:40-41 — Peter raised Dorcas).
- (b) Remove opponents of the Gospel by inflicting infirmities. (Acts 13:6-12 — Elymas the magician smitten with blindness).
- (c) Punish liars with death. (Acts 5:1-12 — Ananias and Sapphira smitten with death for lying to the Holy Spirit). No one today has such powers.

(b) **GENERAL** — to include others beside the twelve who were specially commissioned, or sent forth; e.g. Barnabas (Acts 14:14); Andronicus and Junia (Rom. 16:7); Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25), and Jesus Christ (Heb. 3:1).

"by the will of God" —

Judaizers who arrived at Corinth claimed to work on the same terms (i.e., with the same authority) in the ecclesia as did Paul (2 Cor. 11:12, 13; 12:11, 12). Here Paul acknowledges what later in the epistle is stressed — that his apostleship was not arrogated, but bestowed by Divine selection (Cf. Acts 9:15; Gal. 1:15, 16).

¹Robert Young, *Analytical Concordance to the Holy Bible*, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1965), and hereafter referred to as 'Yg'.

²See *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 107:91-92, p. 197. They also claim to have a president "like unto Moses . . . a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God which he bestowed upon the head of the church".

“Timothy our brother” —

Timothy had worked with Silas in establishing the Corinthian ecclesia (Acts 18:5). He was later sent by Paul for a second visit to the ecclesia (I Cor. 16:10), and despite Paul’s appeal to the Corinthians not to despise him, but to put him “at ease” (I Cor. 16:10, 11), it seems that he was rebuffed. The Corinthians did not appreciate Paul’s “ways” as intended (see I Cor. 4:16, 17) as is indicated by the 2nd Epistle. It is Titus, rather than Timothy, who assumes the role of responsibility at Corinth as bearer of the “Admonitory Letter”. By including Timothy as an accessory to the epistle, Paul implies his endorsement of Timothy’s visit and that the latter bore no ill-will toward the ecclesia.

“the church of God” —

The ecclesias are variously known as the “ecclesia of Christ” (Rom. 16:16), “the ecclesia of God” (I Cor. 1:2), “the ecclesia of the Thessalonians” (I Thess. 1:1), etc. Great stress is placed upon “Church of Christ” by a religious group known today by that name, as if to imply that the NAME identifies the genuine followers of Christ. It is noteworthy that John Thomas in selecting a name for the ecclesia in this age, chose “Christadelphian” from the two Greek words, “Christos” (Christ), and “adelphoi” (brethren). The name “Christadelphian” was taken from Heb. 2:11 — “for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren”.

“Church”, Gk: “ekklesia”, “that which is called out” (Yg.); from “ek”, “out of”, and “klesis”, “a calling”, is used of a body of citizens gathered together to discuss the affairs of state (Acts 19:39) and of the nation of Israel in the wilderness (Acts 7:38). The LXX³ uses “ekklesia” for the Heb. “qahal” translated “company” in Ezek. 38:4, 7, 13, 15. The Gogian confederacy is an ecclesia called out for destruction upon the mountains of Israel. It is God who puts the hooks into the jaws to bring the northern power into the land of Palestine. It is appropriate to stress that “church” usually bears the connotation of a building or religious denomination which does not accurately represent the force of “ekklesia” when used of those called out by the ONE Gospel.

“with all the saints” —

“Saints”, are those “set apart, separate, holy” (Yg) and is usually used of living believers separated from the world by the Truth. It relates to those washed, sanctified and justified at baptism upon an intelligent, repentant belief of the Gospel. (Cf. I Cor. 6:9-11). “Saint” is never used in the N.T. manuscripts as special recognition for writers of Biblical books, (e.g. “St”. Matt., “St”. Luke— deleted in R.S.V.) nor is the word used to designate persons of exceptional holiness or those thought by men to be meritorious after their death, (as is done by the Roman Church).

³LXX is the usual designation for the **Septuagint** translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek about the 3rd Century B.C. LXX will subsequently be used in these notes for this translation. (LXX indicates the 70 translators thought to have worked on this translation).

“in all Achaia⁴—

This implies that there were converts in the Roman province of Achaia outside of Corinth. Presumably these would be in the cities close by — Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1), and Lechaeum. Although addressed primarily to the Corinthian ecclesia, it is a circular letter, like those to the Galatians and the Ephesians. This accounts for the omission of salutations to individuals at the end of the Second Epistle (unlike the First Epistle and other letters like Romans addressed to a particular ecclesia).

1:2 *“Grace be to you” —*

“Grace”, Gk: “charis” — a common greeting in the Epistles (e.g. Rom. 1:7; I Cor. 1:3). It is a request for Divine favour.

“and peace” —

“Peace”, refers to the harmony between God and man that is effected by a belief and obedience to the Gospel. It is a promised blessing in this life: “peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you . . .” (John 14:27). This peace “surpasseth understanding” (Phil. 4:7), and is the special possession of those who are spiritually minded (Rom. 8:6, cf. Num. 6:24 where grace and peace are first associated).

“from God our Father” —

God is the source of grace and peace made available by the sacrificial work of His Son.

“and [from] the Lord Jesus Christ” —

The Son was the vehicle for this manifestation — he gave himself in faithful obedience. “Lord”, Gk: “kurios”, “lord, sir, master” (Yg): “Jesus”, from the Heb. “Joshua”, “Saviour” (Yg): “Christ”, “anointed” (Yg). Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit at his baptism (Acts 10:38; Matt. 3:16) when he was declared to be the Son of God. The word “Christ” is equivalent to the Hebrew word “Messiah”, “anointed” (Yg): (Cf. Dan. 9:25, 26; Jn. 1:41; 4:25).

THANKSGIVING FOR PERSONAL DELIVERANCE AND COMFORT

1:3 *“Blessed be God” —*

“Blessed” means “well-spoken of ” (Yg) — a thankful ascription of praise. The definite article occurs in the Greek text, hence: “Blessed be THE God”,

⁴“Achaia” later denoted the Roman Province comprising Hellas proper, with the adjacent islands including Athens. It is unlikely that it is used here in the wider sense, since Paul uses it elsewhere in the narrow sense of the northern region of the Peloponnese. In I Cor. 16:5 he calls the household of Stephanas “the first fruits of Achaia” which would be an incorrect expression if the Roman Province were meant, since Dionysius, the Areopagite of Athens, and many other Athenians had been converted before Stephanas and his family at Corinth. (See Acts 17:34; I Cor. 1:16).

R.S.V., Nestle. The definite article affords further proof that Jesus “has” a God, and that he is not, therefore, “very God” as trinitarians have taught. (See Jn. 20:17 where Jesus stresses this very point — “I ascend unto MY Father . . . and to MY God, and your God”.)

“even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” —

If the Holy Spirit were a PERSON and not the POWER of God (Luke 1:35), then the HOLY SPIRIT would have been the father of Jesus, and not God Himself. (Cf. 2 Cor. 11:31; Eph. 1:17). Since God is the father of Jesus, then by implication the Holy Spirit cannot be a “Person” within the Godhead.

“the Father of mercies” —

“Mercies” means “pitiful, merciful, compassion” (Yg).

“and the God of all comfort” —

“Comfort”, Gk: “paraklesis”, “a calling alongside” (Yg). The word (and those cognate with it) occurs ten times in the next three verses indicating an obvious point of stress.⁵

1:4 *“Who comforteth us in all our tribulation”*⁶ —

“Tribulation”, Gk: “thlipsis”, “pressure, affliction” (Yg). How did God comfort Paul? The following ways can be inferred from this epistle:

- i. By divine providence — he was delivered from certain death (1:10).
- ii. By the coming of Titus — he brought with him news of the favourable response of the Corinthians to Paul’s “Admonitory Letter” (2 Cor. 2:12, 13 cf. 7:6, 7).
- iii. By the hope which the Truth gave him — the “spirit of faith” (2 Cor. 4:13). “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” (2 Cor. 4:16, 17, R.S.V.)
- iv. By the “Comforter” — The Holy Spirit power given to Paul (Acts 9:17, cf. Jn. 14:16-26).

⁵The A.V. translation loses the force of this repetition by an alternation of the words “consolation” and “comfort” when the same Greek word “paraklesis” is repeated. See R.S.V. which consistently translates this Greek word by “comfort”. The repetition is indicated in these notes by including the Greek word in square brackets with the text of the A.V.

⁶There is a similar repetition of “tribulation” as there is of “comfort”. The force of this repetition is similarly lost by the A.V. with the words “tribulation”, “trouble”, “affliction”, for the one word “thlipsis” in the Greek text. See R.S.V. where “thlipsis” is consistently rendered “affliction”. The repetition is similarly indicated in these notes by including the Greek word in square brackets with the text of the A.V. servant of Isaiah’s prophecy: “That I might know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship [“koinonia”, “partnership, communion, distribution” (Stg)] of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.” (Phil. 3:10; cf. Col. 1:24).

“that we may be able to comfort [parakaleo] them which are in any trouble [‘thlipsis’]” —

Paul always received his blessings as gifts from God to be used for the furtherance of the Truth. (He even instructed the Ephesians to work, not only for their own requirements, but so that they may be able to give to OTHERS in need, Eph. 4:28, cf. Timothy’s example I Cor. 4:17; Phil. 2:21, 22). What a reason for work!

“by the comfort [parakaleo] wherewith we ourselves are comforted [parakaleo] of God” —

Paul is in effect saying that the personal deliverance and comfort which God has given him have taught him HOW to comfort others in affliction.

1:5 *“For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us” —*

“For as we share abundantly in Christ’s sufferings”, R.S.V. “Sufferings” = “suffering, affliction” (Yg).

The believer is a fellow-sufferer with Christ (Rom. 8:17; cf. I Pet. 4:13; Heb. 13:13). Paul bore “about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus” (2 Cor. 4:10), and was an extension of the suffering servant of Isaiah’s prophecy: “That I might know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship [“koinonia”, “partnership, communion, distribution” (Stg)] of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death”. (Phil. 3:10; cf. Col. 1:24).

“so our consolation [paraklesis] also aboundeth by Christ —

“So through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too”, R.S.V. Paul was a Divinely selected “minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable . . .” (Rom. 15:16, R.S.V.). As a “priest”, he brought the Gentile offering to the Christ-altar. In this, Paul rejoiced: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is the ecclesia, of which I became a minister according to the divine office which was given to me . . .” (Col. 1:24, 25).

1:6 *“And whether we be afflicted it is for your consolation [‘paraklesis’] and salvation” —*

This is an expansion of verse 4.

“which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer” —

“which you experience [‘operating’, Nestle; Con. Ver.] when you patiently endure the same suffering that we suffer; R.S.V. “Suffer” = “feel, passion, suffer, vex” (Stg); “to suffer, endure, experience” (Yg). “Enduring” = “remaining under” (Yg).

“or whether we be comforted [parakaleo] it is for your consolation [paraklesis] and salvation” —

The Apostle’s afflictions and comforts alike are for the benefit of the ecclesia.

1:7 *“And our hope of you is steadfast” —*

“Our hope for you is unshaken” R.S.V. “Steadfast” = “stable, firm, sure” (Stg).

knowing —

= “perceive, see, understand” (Stg).

“that as ye are partakers of the sufferings” —

“Partakers”, Gk: “koinonos”, “one having in common” (Yg); “fellowship, partner” (Stg). This either implies a sympathetic identification of the Corinthians with Paul’s experiences, or that similar afflictions pressed the Corinthians, e.g. by Judaizers (cf. 2 Cor. 11:20) and the heathen.

“so ye also be of the consolation [paraklesis]” —

Corinthians enlightened in the principles of the Truth could have the same comfort in the Truth as Paul experienced.

DELIVERANCE FROM A RECENT PERIL — AFFLICTIONS IN ASIA

1:8 *“For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant” —*

This is a common introduction to a new topic. (Cf. I Cor. 10:1; 12:1; I Thess. 4:13; Rom. 1:13).

“of the trouble we experienced in Asia” —

“Asia” denotes a part of Asia Minor, of which Ephesus was the capital (cf. Acts 16:6; 2:9). There were many adversaries to the Truth in this area (I Cor. 16:9; 15:32).

Various explanations have been offered for this “trouble” — illness, physical persecution etc. In support of the latter is the use of the pronouns “we” and “us” (vs. 10) which suggest persecution rather than illness. Consider also the following:

i. Paul insisted that he died “daily” (I Cor. 15:31). He illustrated what he meant by stating that he had fought with “beasts at Ephesus” (I Cor. 15:32).

Paul is not, of course, saying that he literally “died”, but rather his afflictions were so severe that many times he was near death (cf. Acts 14:19); “in deaths oft”, 2 Cor. 11:23). Neither is he alluding to being sewn up in bear skins and made to fight with wild animals, but rather to adversaries who were animal-like in disposition.⁷ This is proven by I Cor. 16:8, 9: “But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are MANY adversaries”, R.S.V.

⁷Paul uses “beasts” in reference to humans in Titus 1:12 when he cites a Cretan writer who described his countrymen as “always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies”.

ii. Likewise — “sufferings”, is the same word as used in 2 Cor. 1:5, for the persecutions Paul experienced in his preaching work, and for which he thanked God for deliverance: “Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me”, (2 Tim. 3:11; see also 2 Cor. 6:4).

iii. Persecutions were widespread, not confined to Jerusalem, Galatia or Ephesus. The afflictions endured by Paul were also suffered by the Macedonians: “How that in a great trial of affliction . . .” (2 Cor. 8:2). It is known for certain that the Macedonians underwent physical persecution. Eg. the Thessalonians: “your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure” (2 Thess. 1:4).

— “for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen” (I Thess. 2:14).

— “that no man should be moved by these afflictions, for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto” (I Thess. 3:3, cf. vs. 7).

It is almost certain therefore that Paul is alluding to persecution rather than illness.

“that we were pressed out of measure” —

“pressed” = “to be weighed down” (Yg); “burdened” Nestle, Con. Ver. “Out of measure”, “beyond measure”.

“above strength” —

= “above power”, “ability” (Yg). The R.S.V. gives a free translation: “For we were so utterly, unbearably crushed”.

“insomuch that we despaired even of life:” —

“Despaired” = “to be utterly at a loss, i.e. despondent, (in) despair” (Stg). Paul rested in the Divine dunamis (strength or power) — “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil 4:13). Paul languished to be “absent from the body” — i.e., to die and be freed from the afflictions he had to suffer.

1:9 *“But we had the sentence of death in ourselves” —*

“Sentence” = “a judicial sentence” (Yg) — usually it relates to an official decision.⁸

“Ourselves”, (plural) likely relates to the travelling companions of Paul in Asia Minor.

“that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead” —

“trust”, Gk: “peitho”, “to persuade”, (Yg), hence R.S.V., “but that was to make us rely not on yourselves . . .”

⁸See *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (ed. W. Nicoll), Vol. III, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903), p. 40.

“Raises” is the usual word for resurrection (standing again) of the dead. Whatever the afflictions experienced by Paul, they were so severe that death seemed an inevitable end. Paul had confidence in the resurrection — (cf. 2 Cor. 4:14). This is an important point which escapes many religionists. If the soul were immortal why does Paul place ALL his hopes on the resurrection? If souls leave the body at death to enjoy bliss, why the great stress on the resurrection of the body? — Simply because all life is corporeal — BODILY. Paul depended on the resurrection for future life.

1:10 *“who delivered me out of so great a death”* —

“Delivered” = “to rescue” (Yg). On more than one occasion Paul’s life was nearly taken by his enemies. (Acts 14:19; 20:3; 2 Cor. 11:23).

Why was this death so great? It is not known for certain since no other part of Scripture clearly refers to the same event.

“and doth deliver in⁹ whom we trust” —

“Trust”, “to hope” (Yg), a different Greek word from “trust” vs. 9, hence R.S.V., “on him we set our hope”.

“that he will deliver us” —

This is suggestive that the deliverance was from afflictions, not illness. It was prophesied that Paul’s work would be accompanied by afflictions (Acts 9:16).

1:11 *“Ye also helping together by prayer for us”* —

“Prayer” = “beseeching, supplication” (Yg) relates to prayer for a particular object, as contrasted with the more general word “pouring out” (Yg), (cf. Eph. 6:18). On many occasions Paul besought the ecclesias to petition the Father to advance the work. He requested the Thessalonians, “Finally brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed on and triumph, as it did among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men . . .” (2 Thess. 3:1, 2, cf. Rom. 15:30, 31; Phil. 1:19).

“that for the gift [bestowed] on us” —

“Gift” Gk: “charisma”, “grace, favour, free gift” (Yg).

“by the means of many persons” —

“Persons” = “face, countenance” (Yg), hence literally, “from many faces” Con. Ver. The picture conveyed is that of many faces turned upward in prayer. The early attitude of prayer was with faces lifted upwards to heaven with arms outstretched, (1 Tim. 2:8) — a custom of Jews and believers in the first century.

⁹“In”, Gk: “eis” with the acc. expresses the direction **towards** which hope looks. See **The Expositor’s Greek Testament**, (ed. W. Nicoll) Vol. III, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903), p.41. This is an important point to note since the Church of Christ wrests Col. 1:13 and Rev. 1:9 on the basis of “into” and “in” (“eis”) in an attempt to prove that the Kingdom was set up at Pentecost.

“thanks be given by many on our behalf” —

Probably refers to Gentiles who learned the Truth as a result of the ministrations of the Apostle Paul as well as the rejoicing of fellow-believers.

SINCERITY OF PURPOSE DEFENDED

The Apostle now commences a sustained self-vindication because of the strong influence of detractors in the ecclesia. It can be inferred from what follows that Paul’s detractors accused him of insincerity of purpose acting merely out of personal expediency.

1:12 *“For our rejoicing is this” —*

“Rejoicing” = “boasting” (Yg), hence “for our boast is this”, R.S.V.; Nestle; Con. Ver.

“the testimony of our conscience” —

“Testimony” = “witness, testimony” (Yg). “Conscience” = ‘co-perception’ (Stg).

The conscience is formed as a result of the sum total of one’s sense impressions — a GOOD conscience is one formed by the Word. Its keen sensibilities can be blunted by repeated, unrepentant sin.

Paul presents a picture of his “conscience” testifying before “himself” in a law court. (He often appeals to his conscience, Acts 23:1; 24:16).

“that in simplicity and godly sincerity” —

“Simplicity” — “sincerity (without dissimulation or self-seeking), bountifulness, singleness” (Stg).

“Sincerity” = “unsullied brightness” (Yg). But this word does not occur in the best manuscripts, but rather “sanctity”, Nestle; “holiness”, R.S.V.; Con. Ver.

“not with fleshly wisdom” —

“Fleshly” = “fleshly, fleshlike” (Yg). “Wisdom”, “sophia”, “wisdom, skill” (Yg). Literally “not IN” (“en”) fleshly wisdom. (cf. I Cor. 1:17; 2:4, 13).

Paul never elevated dialectic skill and rhetoric above the Divine enlightenment obtained by the submission of the intellect to the will of God. It was by “the open statement of the truth”, (2 Cor. 4:2), that he commended himself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.

“but by the grace of God” —

Literally, “in [‘en’] the grace of God”, i.e., in possession of it. God’s favour was given to him so that he would shape his behaviour in obedience to Divine revelation.

“we have had our conversation in the world [‘kosmos’]” —

“Conversation” = “to turn up and down, behave oneself” (Yg); “behave” R.S.V., Nestle; Con. Ver. — one’s ordinary conduct in life.¹⁰ “Conversation” today means interchange of thought in speech, which is different from its meaning in 1611.

The world is the “heathen” world (I Cor. 5:10).

“and more abundantly to you-ward” —

Elsewhere Paul points out that his integrity is indicated by his refusal to be burdensome to the Corinthians in receiving rightful support (cf. 2 Cor. 12:11-13). In so doing he went beyond what could be expected of apostles.

PAUL’S SINCERITY IS GENUINE; HIS LETTERS ARE NOT AT VARIANCE WITH THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF HIM PERSONALLY

1:13 *“For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge [‘understand’ R.S.V.¹¹]” —*

I.e., he means what he says, and what he says can be known accurately by comparison, examination and reasoning. “Acknowledge”, Gk: “epiginosko”, “to make fully known” (Yg).

“and I trust ye shall acknowledge [‘epiginosko’] even to the end” —

“Trust” = “to hope”, (Yg), a different Greek word from “trust” vs. 9.

The “end” refers to the day when the secrets of men shall be judged; the day of Jesus Christ (I Cor. 1:8).

1:14 *“As ye also have acknowledged [‘understood in part’, R.S.V.] us in part” —*

“Acknowledge”, Gk “epiginosko”. This appears paradoxical — how could Paul be fully known in part? By the refusal of part of the Corinthian ecclesia to acknowledge his Apostolic credentials and ecclesial authority which were Divinely delegated (cf. I Cor. 3:4; 9:2).

“that we are your rejoicing [‘pride’, R.S.V.; ‘glorying’, Con. Ver.] —

“Rejoicing” = “boasting” (Yg). This had been the initial attitude of the Galatian ecclesias towards Paul. They received him as “an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus”. (Gal. 4:14, 15).

¹⁰J. Lias, (ed.) *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1897), p.30.

¹¹The fact that Paul writes this way implying a reticence on the part of the Corinthians to accept his integrity, strongly suggests that Timothy’s visit was a failure at least in part “to bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ” (I Cor. 4:17).

“even as ye also are ours” —

Paul had a personal affection for his converts. As he told the Thessalonians “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy”. (I Thess. 2:19, 20; cf. Phil. 2:16).

“in the day of the Lord Jesus” —

The Day of Judgment (I Cor. 1:7, 8; Phil. 1:10; I Thess. 5:2) — The day when the fire of judgment shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. (I Cor. 3:13; 4:3, 5). With an expectation such as this — when the secrets of men’s hearts would be manifest — could Paul possibly be acting insincerely as his detractors insinuated?

TRAVEL PLAN CHANGES — NOT DUE TO VACILLATION

It can be inferred from this chapter that Paul’s detractors were alleging that Paul’s change in travel plans indicated that he was a vacillating person, who by an unprincipled cunning to suit his own advantage, could say “yes” when he meant “no”, and “no” when he meant “yes”. It is to this charge that he now addresses himself.

1:15 *“And in this confidence” —*

“Confidence” = “to have good courage” (Yg); “because I was sure of this”, R.S.V.; “persuasion”, Nestle.

“I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit [mg. ‘grace’]” —

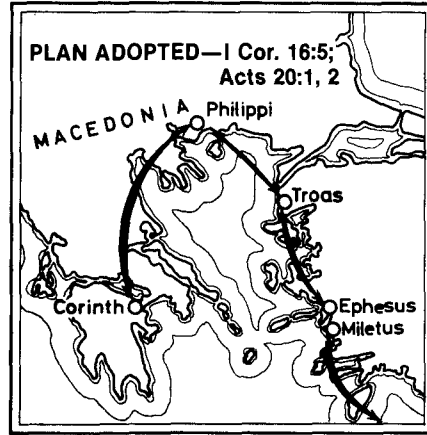
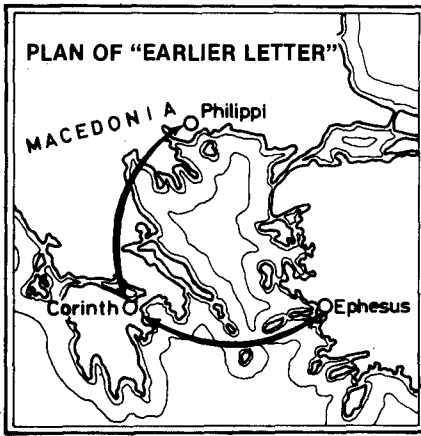
“I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a double pleasure” R.S.V.

“Minded” means “to wish, will, determine” (Yg). By the “second benefit” Paul refers to the effects of the visit which he hoped to make to the Corinthians after his return from Macedonia. The circumstances seem to have been as follows:

1. While at Ephesus (Acts 19), Paul intended to cross the Aegean Sea to Corinth on his way to Macedonia, and come back through Corinth on his way to Judea with contributions for the Jerusalem Fund. (I Cor. 16:3, 4).
2. These plans must have been given in the “Earlier Letter”, (the one preceding “First Corinthians”, I Cor. 5:9) to the Corinthians since the travel plan actually adopted is the one in I Cor. 16:5. This route was Ephesus — Corinth — Macedonia. (Acts 20:1; 2 Cor. 2:12, 7:5). The change in plan left Paul open to the charge of vacillation and fickleness which he now answers.

1:16 *“and of you to be brought on my way toward Judea” —*

“Brought on my way” = “escort or aid in travel” (Stg). Colloquially — “seeing me off”. This was a common First Century practice. (Cf. Acts 15:3; 20:38; 21:5; Rom. 15:24; I Cor. 16:6, 11; Titus 3:13; 3 Jn. 6).



ALLEGATIONS OF FICKLENESS AND VACILLATION

Paul's detractors insinuated either or both:

- (a) **Fickle** — He was a man without steady purpose (like his attitude to circumcision e.g. Titus and Timothy) shifting from travel plan to travel plan to suit his own convenience.
- (b) **Fleshly** — (worldly) — His plans were formed according to caprice — unprincipled motives. He said "yes", when he meant or contemplated a "no". (Cf. Prov. 20:14 — like the buyer who says "It is naught, it is naught . . . but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth").

1:17 *"When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness?"* —

"Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this?" R.S.V. "Minded" means "to wish, will, determine" (Yg). The same word occurs in vs. 15, translated "minded". "Lightness" = "levity, fickleness" (Stg).

"or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh" —

"Do I make my plans like a worldly man", R.S.V. Paul's adversaries, in order to smear Paul's character in the ecclesia, stated that he intended from the beginning to substitute his refusal to suit his own purposes.

"that with me there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay?" —

"Ready to say Yes and No at once?" R.S.V.; i.e. that he changed plans according to caprice — "Yes" today, and "No" tomorrow.

1:18 *"But as God is true"* —

"As the LORD liveth" (1 Sam. 20:3; 2 Sam. 2:27) or the expression: "as the truth of Christ is in me" (2 Cor. 11:10). Paul invoked the witness of God's faithfulness as a testimony to his own integrity. The Greek text does not imply an adjuration as does the A.V., but an asseveration — a solemn declaration.

“our word toward you was not yea and nay” —

i.e., was not vacillating. (cf. 2:17).

“Word” Gk: “logos”, “a word, speech, matter, reason” (Yg). Here it means discourse. (cf. I Cor. 1:5).

PAUL’S MINISTRY AS MESSIAH’S DEPUTY TESTIFIES TO HIS PERSONAL INTEGRITY

1:19 *“For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us” —*

Paul reminds the Corinthians that his preaching work by which they received their knowledge of Christ came by a straight-forward presentation. There was no fickleness in his assertion of the Messiahship of Jesus. If his scruples regarding preaching are unimpeachable, so also by implication is his conduct on related matters.

“Preach” means “to cry, or proclaim as an herald” (Yg).

“even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus” —

These three brought the Gospel to Corinth (Acts 18:5 cf. I Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1).

Silvanus (Silas) was a prophet (Acts 15:32) and a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37). He was a “chief man among the brethren” sent with Paul and Barnabas to guarantee the authenticity of the Apostolic Letter from the Jerusalem Conference to Antioch. (Acts 15:22, 25, 27). Silas accompanied Paul on the 2nd journey at Philippi (Acts 16:19-40); Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth (Acts 17:1, 4, 10, 15). He was not the same person as Luke as some have supposed. (cf. Acts 16:4-8, 10-17, 19, 20).

Timothy’s importance for the work at Corinth can be seen by the following brief summary:

1. He joined Paul on his 2nd journey at Lystra. (Acts 16:1-3).
2. He stayed at Berea with Silas when Judaisers from Thessalonica “stirred up the people” (Acts 17:13-15). Meanwhile Paul travelled to Athens and then gave charge that Timothy and Silas should join him as soon as possible (Acts 17:15).
3. Timothy and Silas rejoined Paul at Corinth (Acts 18:5) bringing favourable news from the Thessalonian ecclesia (I Thess. 3:1-6).
4. Paul left for Ephesus, and was there either accompanied or joined later by Timothy, who was then sent with Erastus back to Macedonia (Acts 19:22), probably to set up the Jerusalem Poor Fund, and to stop in at Corinth to solidify Paul’s relationship with the ecclesia (I Cor. 16:10). Paul’s stewardship had been in question by his detractors (I Cor. 4:1-4) and Timothy would personally testify to his integrity, (I Cor. 4:16-21).

“was not yea and nay, but in him was yea” —

No duplicity was evidenced in their attestation to the Sonship and Messiahship of Jesus. There is an ironical side to Paul’s reasoning. The Judaisers had suc-

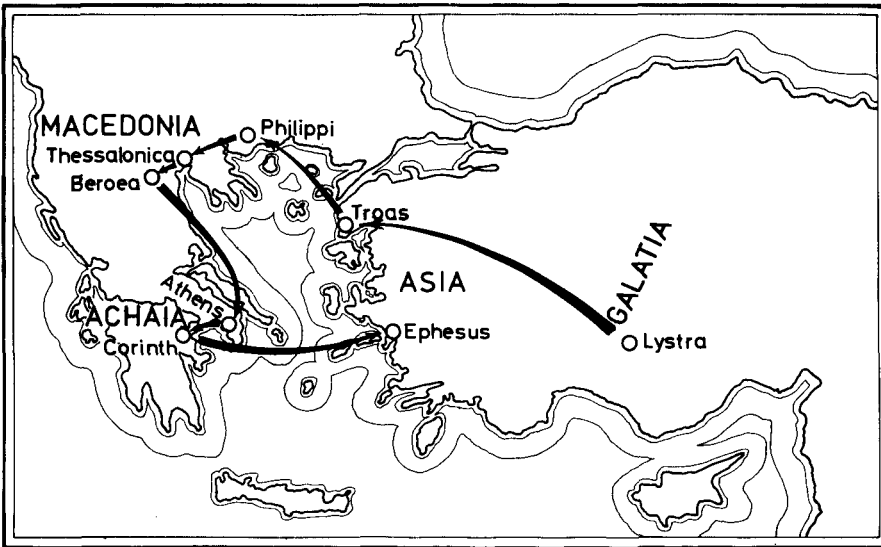
ceeded in stirring ecclesial opinion against Paul on the grounds of vacillation, fickleness, and fleshly wisdom, but such in fact was the position of the Judaiser. God had promised salvation to Jew and Gentile, but their promise had been restricted to a legal “salvation” on the basis of Mosaic Law-keeping. In effect this made God “yes” to the Jew and “no” to the Gentiles, whereas on the basis of faith He was “yes” to both. The argument might be summarised as follows:

- (a) One who with integrity sets forth the realisation of God’s promises in the Sonship and Messiahship of Jesus will not practise double-dealing with his own PROMISES.

By implication:

- (b) On the other hand those who make God a “double-dealer” are not to be believed when they make Paul one.

THE TRAVELS OF TIMOTHY



“For all the promises of God in him are yea” —

God sent the Son “to confirm the promises made unto the fathers” (Rom. 15:8). Christ is the “alpha” and “omega” of the Divine purpose.

“and in him Amen” —

“Amen”, Gk: = “nai”, is the Hebrew — “so be it, so it is” (Yg). “That is why we utter the Amen through him”, R.S.V. Christ was not only the antitypical passover lamb, he was also the covenant victim (I Cor. 5:7; 11:24). As such his title is the “Amen” — “the faithful and true witness” (Rev. 3:14).

“unto the glory of God by us”.

PAUL'S IMMOVABILITY IS DUE TO HIS DIVINE COMMISSION

1:21 *"Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ" —*

"Stablisheth" = "to confirm, establish", (Yg); "making firm", Nestle.

"and hath anointed us, is God" —

"Anointed" = "to rub" (Yg). The false apostles at Corinth claimed to work on the same terms as Paul (11:12-15), but Paul is here claiming a preaching commission on DIVINE authority. [cf. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor . . ." (Lk. 4:18)].

1:22 *"Who hath also sealed us" —*

"Sealed" = "to seal, impress" (Yg). The aorist is used indicating a completed act at a definite point in time. Paul was commissioned after his baptism to "bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

"and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" —

"Earnest" = "surety, pledge" (Yg). The word relates to a first instalment given in pledge of full payment in due course. (See 2 Cor. 5:5—"who hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit"). The divine seal was evidenced in Holy Spirit gifts which validated the Apostle's authority claim — "signs, wonders, and mighty deeds" (2 Cor. 12:12). But this was only a "tasting" of the "powers of the world [age] to come" (Heb. 6:4, 5).

CHANGE OF PLANS NOT DUE TO FICKLENESS, BUT RATHER PAUL'S DESIRE TO SPARE THE CORINTHIANS ANOTHER PAINFUL VISIT.

1:23 *"Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul*

[Gk: 'psuche', 'life' Nestle]" —

"But I call God to witness against me" R.S.V. "Call" = "to call upon" (Yg).

"Record" = "a witness, martyr, record" (Stg); "witness" Nestle; Con. Ver.

Paul frequently demonstrated his absolute integrity by an appeal to God as witness. (Rom. 1:9; Gal. 1:20; Phil. 1:8; 1 Thess. 2:5, 10). He was prepared to bear Divine punishment for perjuring himself before God if his assurances upon oath were not true.

"that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth" —

"Spare" = "to spare, forbear" (Yg). The A.V. "Not as yet" is misleading since it implies that Paul had not as yet made a painful visit to Corinth, but such was not the case as the R.S.V. indicates: "I refrained from coming". Paul had already made a painful visit to Corinth (2:1; 13:2).

1:24 *“Not for that we have dominion over your faith” —*

“Dominion” = “to have or exercise lordship” (Yg). Hence, R.S.V. — “not that we LORD IT OVER your faith”. Undoubtedly this is a parenthetical verse, a digression from the main flow of thought which is continued in 2:1-4. But Paul stresses a recurrent concern that he is suspect for irresponsible use of authority. (cf. 4:5; 7:2; 10:8).

“but are helpers of your joy [Gk: ‘charas’]” —

“Helpers” = “fellow or joint worker” (Yg). Paul takes another opportunity to strengthen his ties with the ecclesia (cf. 8:23), and to make it clear that of the “rod” or “love” alternatives that he presented to the ecclesia, I Cor. 4:21, he preferred the latter.

“for by faith ye stand” —

“Stand” = “to set, place” (Yg). Conformity merely on the basis of imposed authority would vitiate the relationship of God and His sons and daughters on the basis of faith.

2 CORINTHIANS 2

PAUL — A MAN OF SINCERITY, NOT A HUCKSTER

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

The argument of chapter one is continued. Paul catalogues his evidence in self-vindication against the Corinthian charges of insincerity and worldliness.

2:1-4 REASONS FOR CHANGE OF TRAVEL PLANS GIVEN:

2:1 (a) To avoid another painful visit — painful to the Corinthians and painful for Paul.

2:2-4 (b) Love of the Corinthian brethren. One motivated by his own self-interest does not write out of affliction, anguish and tears.

2:5-11 THE OFFENDER—HIS PUNISHMENT AND RESTORATION

2:5 The issue is one of principle affecting the whole ecclesia, and not merely of personal concern for Paul.

2:6-8 The offender's repentance indicates the punishment, sanctioned by the majority, has been effective, therefore re-instate him.

2:9 The letter giving instructions in this matter ("Admonitory Letter", not the 1st Epistle), was intended as a test of Corinthian loyalty to Paul's apostolic authority.

2:10 Paul again emphasises that as far as he is concerned there is no personal animosity — once the problem is resolved, he is prepared to forgive the offence.

2:11 Instructions for speedy restoration of the offender lest the adversary — the world — claim another victim.

2:12-13 PAUL'S AGITATED CONCERN FOR CORINTHIAN RESPONSE (TO THE "ADMONITORY LETTER") IS NOT THE PRODUCT OF INSINCERITY AND WORLDLINESS!

Despite God-given opportunities to preach the Truth at Troas, concern for Titus compelled Paul to continue to Macedonia. Paul returns to this point in ch. 7:5-7.

2:14-17 CHRIST'S TRIUMPHAL PROCESSION

Christ is presented as a victorious Roman general celebrating a triumph in procession with his apostles on their return from battle.

2:14 Apostles spread the fragrance of knowledge of Christ.

2:15-16 Apostles are the aroma:

- (a) to those being saved — a fragrance to life,
- (b) to those perishing — an odour of death.

2:17 The victory is accomplished by divine commission, not human sufficiency.

Before the very sight of God the apostles are validated as men of sincerity and not hucksters.

REASONS FOR CHANGE OF TRAVEL PLANS GIVEN

2:1 *“But I determined this with myself” —*

“For I made up my mind”, R.S.V. “Determined” = “to judge, decide” (Yg); “decided”, Nestle; “decide”, Con. Ver.

“that I would not come again to you in heaviness” —

“Not to make another painful visit”, R.S.V.¹ “Heaviness” = Gk: “lupe”, “grief” (Yg). Lupeo (verb) and words cognate with it occur frequently in this chapter, but are obscured in the A.V. which variously translates the word, “heaviness”, “sorry”, “grieved”, “sorrow”. The Gk. word is indicated in these notes by square brackets in the text of the A.V.

“Another painful visit” requires Paul to have made an “intermediate visit” to Corinth, the details of which have not been preserved. Certainly the “painful visit” could not describe Paul’s stay at Corinth when he founded the ecclesia, for such was not a “visit” (the ecclesia was not founded until Paul’s preaching resulted in converts) and it was not “painful”. At the conclusion of his First Epistle, Paul looked forward with anticipation to returning to the ecclesia (I Cor. 16:5-7), but deteriorating conditions required this short disciplinary trip. This conclusion is supported by 12:14; 13:1.

2:2 *“For if I make you sorry [Gk: ‘lupeo’], who is he then that maketh me glad” —*

“Glad”, Gk: “euphraino”, “to make glad, cheer” (Yg).

“but the same which is made sorry [Gk: ‘lupeo’] by me?” —

“but the one whom I have pained”, R.S.V. Who was this individual and what was his offence? The answer is simple — we do not know. It may be thought that Paul is referring to the incestuous person of I Cor. 5, but the following indicates that such is not the case:

- (a) Paul stated that he was writing “that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in every thing”, (2:9, R.S.V.). This would hardly be the reason, if the issue was the case of incest. Paul was scandalised at the ecclesial attitude, and instructed that the wicked person be **DRIVEN OUT** of the ecclesia (I Cor. 5:13, R.S.V.).

¹Although this sense is not explicit in the A.V., the R.S.V. is supported by Moffatt, Weymouth, J. B. Phillips in reproducing in English the emphasis conveyed by the word order in the Greek text. See W.F. Barling, *The Letters to Corinth*, (Birmingham: The Christadelphian, 1960), p.34.

- (b) The language of 2 Cor. 2:9, 10 is PERSONAL, implying an attack by a member of the Corinthian ecclesia on Paul himself. This interpretation would explain Paul's insistence that it was the PRINCIPLE which was important in his letter (2:5) and that he personally bore no animosity toward the offender (2:10).
- (c) Paul stated that the forgiveness extended (if such were required, vs. 10) had been for the sake of the Corinthians. This is hardly the language to describe so serious an offence as immorality!

2:3 *"And I wrote this same ['very thing', Nestle] unto you" —*

"and I wrote as I did", R.S.V. This probably refers to Paul's altered travel plans set out in the "Admonitory Letter" carried by Titus.

The correspondence between Paul and the Corinthians was probably as follows:

1. **"Earlier Letter"** — sent by Paul to the Corinthians (I Cor. 5:9).
2. **1st Epistle** — Paul replies to their questions and gives forthright instruction regarding irregularities in the ecclesia partly on the basis of "inside" information (I Cor. 1:11; 5:1).
3. **Intermediate** — **"Admonitory Letter"** — The situation had deteriorated at Corinth. A short visit by Paul was ineffective and so Paul wrote this letter chiefly concerning one offender. (2 Cor. 2:3). Titus is the bearer of this letter. (cf. 2 Cor. 2:12, 13; 7:6-13).
4. **2nd Epistle** — When Paul hears of the favourable reception which Titus met, Paul pens this epistle in reply to personal allegations and to counteract the pernicious influence of the Judaisers still evident in the ecclesia.

"lest, when I came, I should have sorrow [Gk: 'lupe'] from them of whom I ought to rejoice" —

"Rejoice" = "to rejoice, be glad" (Yg). Paul's desire was to come to Corinth to share a joyful reunion with the ecclesia, but this could only occur if the Corinthians put things right in the ecclesia. As things stood a visit from him could only result in a painful disciplining of the ecclesia. Paul preferred the Corinthian brethren to put their own house in order, so for the time being a letter would have to suffice — a personal visit would have to wait until later. If they were so intent on his visiting the ecclesia, such could be abetted by ensuring a joyful visit by putting things right in the ecclesia first.

"having confidence in you all" —

"confidence" = "to persuade" (Yg); "I felt sure", R.S.V.; cf. 7:16. Paul repeatedly reassures the Corinthian brethren of his identity of feelings, hopes, and aspirations with all of the ecclesia despite the estrangement which has occurred. Paul's severity stems from his concern for the spiritual welfare of the Corinthians despite Judaistic claims to the contrary that Paul was a vacillating, fickle character with capricious designs.

“that my joy is the joy of you all” —

The repetition of “all” is no doubt indicative of Paul’s refusal to acknowledge ANY faction (Judaistic or otherwise). His identification was with the whole ecclesia. Paul now anticipates the rejoinder — if you are so concerned, Paul, for our pain, why did you write so severely? It appears that Paul’s detractors were claiming that he acted with a heavy hand in ecclesial affairs by letter — “bold when away” (cf. 2 Cor. 10:1, here he quotes the detractor, see R.S.V.). The following points are evidenced in his argument:

1. He expressly states that he was not desirous of having dominion (“rule”, Nestle) over their faith (1:24).
2. The fact that he wrote out of “affliction, anguish of heart” and “many tears” indicates that he was not moved to a show of apostolic authority out of caprice, but out of concern for their spiritual welfare. (2:4; 7:12).
3. He does not rejoice in their pain, but in their grief unto “godly repentance” (2 Cor. 7:9, 11).

2:4 *“For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears” —*

“Affliction” = “pressure” (Yg). “Anguish = “holding together” (Yg); “anxiety”, Nestle; “pressure of heart”, Con. Ver.; “a spasm”.² The letter referred to is the “Intermediate” or “Admonitory Letter”, not the First Epistle. See note on vs. 3.

“not that ye should be grieved [Gk: ‘lupeo’]” —

“not to cause you pain”, R.S.V. (cf. 2 Cor. 7:8-11).

“but that ye might know the love [Gk: ‘agape’] which I have more abundantly [‘superabundantly’, Con. Ver.] unto you” —

Paul’s agape for the Corinthians is expounded in 1 Cor. 13. The fact that he could write such a severe letter out of superabundant agape is an added exposition of 1 Cor. 13. Agape is complementary to a belief of the Truth, and if severity is required to establish the Truth then such conduct is in keeping with agape — how different from the “love” of Evangelical Christianity, in which benevolent acts devoid of a belief of the Truth are applauded as the apex of Christianity.

5-11 THE OFFENDER — HIS PUNISHMENT AND RESTORATION

2:5 *“But if any have caused grief [Gk: ‘lupeo’] he hath not grieved [Gk: Lupeo’] me, but in part” —*

“But if one has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure”, R.S.V. Paul is placing the personal aspect of the situation in the background, and treats it as a matter of principle for the whole ecclesia.

²I.e., as indicated in the drawing or holding together in a spasm. **Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges**: 11 Corinthians, (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1897), p.38. “Sunochē” occurs in only one other place, Lk. 21:25, where it is translated “perplexity”.

*“that I may not overcharge you all”*³ —

“Overcharge” = “to overload, overburden” (Yg); “not to put it too severely — to you all”, R.S.V. The Con. Ver. places “lest I may be burdening” in parenthesis — “Now if anyone has caused sorrow, he has not made me sorry, but in part (lest I may be burdening) you all”. The intent seems to be Paul’s reticence to assume a COMPLETE concern on the part of the WHOLE ecclesia. This interpretation is supported by reading the verse with the parenthesis as in the Con. Ver. and by the fact that Paul infers that the punishment was only sanctioned by the MAJORITY, not ALL. (cf. vs. 6).

2:6 *“Sufficient to such a man is this punishment [‘which was inflicted’, is deleted in the Gk. text] of many”* —

“Punishment”, Gk: *epitimia*, “penalty, burden” (Yg); “rebuke”,⁴ Con. Ver. “Sufficient”, Gk: “*hikanos*”, “coming up to”, (Yg); “enough”, Nestle, Con. Ver. “Many”, Gk: “*pleion*”, “more, greater” (Yg); “majority”, Nestle, Con. Ver.

Two interpretations are possible:

- (a) That an ecclesial decision on the punishment was supported by a majority VOTE of the ecclesia.⁵
- (b) That Paul’s instructions were carried out with the sanction and support of the majority, although no formal vote was taken. No doubt the Judaistic “believers” would desist, if to support the action were to endorse Paul’s apostolic authority and gospel of Gentile freedom from the Law. Despite a general support for Paul, chs. 10-13 indicate the strength of Judaistic influence in the Corinthian ecclesia.

2:7 *“So that contrariwise”* —

“Contrariwise” means “the opposite” (Yg); “on the contrary” Nestle, Con. Ver. The rebuke and punishment were remedial in intent, and since the offender favourably responded, the punishment (at LEAST disfellowship, other punishment could have been inflicted) should cease.

“ye ought rather to forgive [him], and comfort [him]” —

“So that you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him”, R.S.V. “Forgive, Gk: *charizomai*, “to be gracious to” (Yg). “Comfort”, Gk: [*parakaleo*], “to call beside” (Yg); i.e. to restore to fellowship.

“lest perhaps such an one” —

“Perhaps” = “lest by any means”, (Yg). Paul assiduously refrains from mentioning the offender’s name. Such would be in keeping with the interpretation that the offence was a personal attack upon Paul.

³See the use of this word translated “chargeable” in I Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8.

⁴“*Eptimia*” has the idea of rebuke as well as punishment”. Cambridge Bible Commentary, II Cor., *ibid.*, p.39.

“should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow [Gk: ‘lupe’]” —

“Or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow” R.S.V. “overmuch” = “excessive”, Con. Ver. The instruction given here is in keeping with apostolic teaching elsewhere (Col. 3:13; Eph. 4:31, 32).

How would the offender be overcome by grief? By spiritual ruin through despair, or even self-destruction.

2:8 *“Wherefore I beseech you” —*

“Beseech”, Gk:[parakaleo], “to call to one’s side”. The tender appeal by Paul to the ecclesia was a further proof that he was not imposing dominion over their faith.

“that ye would confirm [‘your’ not in Gk. text] love [Gk: ‘agape’] toward him.” —

“Confirm” = “reaffirm your love to him” R.S.V. The word is used for the ratification of a covenant (Gal. 3:15, 17) and suggests a formal decision by which the offender was to be re-instated. His dismissal may have taken the form of a formal rebuke before the ecclesia. (cf. I Tim. 5:20).

An important distinction between phileo (love — e.g. of the brethren) and agape might be noted. The former is emotional in character, often spontaneous and varying in intensity with one’s predispositions. Agape, however, can be COMMANDED because its roots are intellectual, not merely attitudinal. When phileo would have been difficult for some Corinthians to extend to the offender, agape could be extended by all.

2:9 *“For to this end also did I write” —*

This is further proof that Paul is not referring to the First Epistle, since there was much in that Epistle that was INSTRUCTIONAL in content, e.g., ch. 12.

“that I might know the proof of you” —

“Proof” = “trial” (Yg).

“whether ye be obedient in all things” —

The implementation of Paul’s instruction to receive the offender back into fellowship afforded another test as to whether or not the Corinthians would be “obedient in all things”.

2:10 *“To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also:” —*

“Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive”, R.S.V.; “But anyone who has your forgiveness has mine too”, N.E.B.; “Now with whom you are dealing graciously in anything, I, also”, Con. Ver. It is noteworthy that the A.V. places the stress on the OFFENCE, whereas the R.S.V., N.E.B. and Con. Ver. place the stress on the WHOMSOEVER; i.e., the persons. To forgive the person would be to forgive the sin.

⁵If this is the correct interpretation, then this passage and Acts 6:5 provide examples of voting to resolve ecclesial difficulties in the First Century ecclesias.

“for if I forgave anything to whom I forgave it” —

“What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything”, R.S.V. There almost appears to be a reticence by Paul to use “forgive” as if it were an inappropriate word to use, since the grief (pain) caused was not only his but the Corinthians as well (vs. 5). “If I have forgiven anything” is probably parenthetical and is indicated as such in the Con. Ver., and in the Twentieth Century New Testament.

“for your sakes forgave I it” —

Paul again asserts his intimate concern for the ecclesia and in so doing militates against the false accusations of caprice, worldliness and insincerity.

“in the person of Christ” —

“Person” = “face, countenance (Yg). “In the PRESENCE of Christ” R.S.V.; R.V. mg. Christ was privy to, and approved Paul’s action.

2:11 *“lest Satan should get an advantage of us” —*

“Advantage” means “to get more than another” (Yg). Probably relates to the “world”, cf. I Cor. 5:5, 13, but may refer to the chief Judaiser who, as Paul said, paraded himself as an “angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

“for we are not ignorant of his devices” —

“Devices” = “thought, plan” (Yg); “designs”, R.S.V., Nestle. This is suggestive language that the “world” (adversary) Paul alludes to is the chief Judaiser. They walked in “craftiness” and deceit. (cf. 2 Cor. 4:2 where the context—ch.3 —relates to the Judaiser’s teaching). The aim of the Judaisers at Corinth was to create a breach between Paul and the ecclesia by vilification of his character in such a way that they could gain complete control over the ecclesia (cf. 2 Cor. 11:12, R.S.V., 20).

Vv. 12-13 AGITATED CONCERN FOR CORINTHIAN RESPONSES (TO THE ADMONITORY LETTER) IS NOT THE PRODUCT OF INSINCERITY AND WORLDLINESS!

Paul’s concern for the ecclesia is further shown to be absolutely genuine. His concern for their response to the “Admonitory Letter” was so great that he was unable to preach at Troas despite God-given opportunities. Such conduct was incompatible with the detractors’ charges that he preached to get a following and insincerely altered travel plans.

2:12 *“Furthermore [deleted Gk. text] when I came to Troas” —*

“But coming to Troas”, Nestle; “when I came to Troas”, R.S.V. Literally to the Troas, the angle of territory to the south of the Hellespont on which Troy was situated.

“to preach Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened unto me of [the] Lord” —

“Preach” = “to tell good news or tidings”, (Yg). “Of”, Gk: “en”, “by” Nestle; “in”, R.S.V.



CAPTIVE CHIEFTAINS

PRISONERS AND THEIR WEAPONS

CHAINED PRISONERS

When Paul returned to Troas, however, he found believers there (Acts 20:6), converts, no doubt from his short visit (vs. 13).

2:13 *"I had no rest in my spirit"* —

"Spirit", Gk: "pneuma", "mind", R.S.V. Literally, "I have no ease in my spirit", Con. Ver., (perfect tense). The reality was so vivid, that Paul presents himself as back in Troas.

"because I found not Titus my brother:" —

Titus had earlier been sent by Paul to superintend the collection for the saints (I Cor. 16:1). He was of unimpeachable character, and was Paul's "partner and fellow-helper" (7:13, 14; 8:23).

"but taking my leave of them" —

"But saying farewell", Nestle. i.e., to the brethren of Troas (vs.12).

"I went from thence into Macedonia" —

Paul would probably journey by ship from Troas to the province of Macedonia. In Macedonia Paul experienced affliction in everything: outside fightings; inside fears. It was with great consolation that Titus was found. (Cf. 2 Cor. 7:5-7).

Vv. 14-17 CHRIST'S TRIUMPHAL PROCESSION

Paul employs the imagery of a Roman victory parade to present himself as a celebrant in Messiah's triumphal procession. Two images are employed:

(a) The apostles — the holders of the incense spreading the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ.

(b) The apostles are the aroma — to those being saved — a fragrance to life. To those perishing — a death odour!

"Now thanks be to God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ" —

"Triumph" = "to LEAD in triumph, cause to triumph" (Yg). The verb means to lead as well as to cause. Paul always acknowledges that the great treasure which he has is in earthen vessels, so that the excellency of the power may be of God. (Cf. 2 Cor. 4:7).



LICTORS

TRIUMPHANT GENERAL

SENATORS AND MAGISTRATES

ROMAN VICTORY PARADE

“and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place” —
 “Savour” = “a smell, odour”, (Yg). “And through us spreads the fragrance of him everywhere”, R.S.V. The apostles are presented as the incense carriers in the victorious procession. The apostles were instrumental in heralding the gospel of the kingdom to “every creature which is under heaven” (Col. 1:23).

2:15 *“For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ”* —

“Sweet” = “sweet smell, fragrance” (Yg). The apostles were like the fragrance which wafted on the air and diffused through the great crowds.

“in them that are saved” —

The A.V. erroneously supports the doctrine of “eternal security”. A believer is not ultimately “saved” until he is rescued at the Judgment Seat. Only those who endure “unto the end” can expect such grace. (Matt. 10:22; cf. I Cor. 3:15; 15:2). The tense is continuous in the Greek text, and is properly rendered “being saved”, R.S.V., Nestle, Con. Ver. In the Roman triumphal procession these were the friends and troops of the general for whom the odour was a fragrance of life — rejoicing in the victory with the spoils (cf. vs. 16).

“and in them that perish:” —

“those perishing”, R.S.V. “Perish” means “to loose, loose away, destroy” (Yg). To the captives in the train, the fragrance was a death-odour — destruction, a living death of slavery. Are these the Judaisers? (Cf. 2 Cor. 4:3, 4).

2:16 *“To the one [‘to the latter’, Nestle] we are the savour of death unto death;”* —

To the captives, imbibing the odour was a “deadly fume that kills”, N.E.B. Those “dead in trespasses and sins” — without hope (Eph. 2:12), have only the expectation of dissolution in the grave. In this category were the mockers of Athens (Acts 17:32); the Jews for whom the cross was a stone of stumbling; the Greeks for whom it was foolishness (cf. I Cor. 1:23), and the unrepentant false apostles at Corinth who sought to undermine Paul’s work. (2 Cor. 11:12, 13).

"and to the other a savour of life unto life" —

To those with minds enlightened by an obedience to the gospel, they were delivered from the bondage of fear of death in expectation that the Truth had the power of present deliverance as well as future deliverance. Such were recipients of the promise for the "life which now is" and "of that which is to come" (I Tim 4:8).⁶

"And who is sufficient for these things?" —

Only those commissioned by God! (vs. 17).

2:17 THE VICTORY IS THE RESULT OF DIVINE COMMISSION, NOT HUMAN SUFFICIENCY

"For we are not as [the' Gk. text] many, which corrupt the word of God:" —

"Corrupt" = "to act as a (corrupt) vintner" (Yg); "pedlars", R.S.V.; "as the many hawking . . .", Nestle; "making merchandise" R.V. mg.; "huckster", (Stg)⁶ — a clear allusion to the practices of the Judaising believers who adulterated the gospel by teaching that the keeping of the Law was essential for salvation. (Cf. 2 Cor. 3:1; 4:2; 11:22). Judaisers took advantage of the Corinthian believers. (Cf. I Cor. 9:12; 2 Cor. 11:20).

"but as of sincerity" —

"Sincerity" means "unsullied brightness" (Yg). The prior argumentation of this chapter has constituted the evidence on which this conclusion is based. This is the conclusion of the very issue in question. (Cf. 2 Cor. 1:12, 13).

"but as of God," —

R.S.V. paraphrases the argument: "But as men commissioned by God" (cf. 4:1 — "seeing we have received this ministry"). Unlike the self-commissioned pseudo-apostles, (who compared themselves with one another) Paul's commission was divine (cf. Gal. 1:11, 12 where the same point is made to the Galatian believers).

"in the sight of God speak we in Christ" —

"Sight" means "over against, in the face of" (Yg). Paul reasserts his genuineness. In full acknowledgement that he would have to give an account of the deeds done in the body (2 Cor. 5:10) he was prepared to vindicate his integrity and divine commission.

⁶The word here translated "corrupt" occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is derived from a substantive equivalent in meaning to "higgler" or "huckster", especially a dealer in wine (see the LXX of Isa. 1:22) and hence from the dishonest practices of these small dealers it has come, by a process somewhat similar to mean "adulterate", i.e., to mix what should be pure with worthless, or even deleterious substances. **Cambridge Bible Commentary**, 2 Cor., *ibid.*, p.45.

2 CORINTHIANS 3

THE MINISTRATION OF THE 'SPIRIT', SUPERIOR TO THAT OF THE LAW

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

- 3:1-3 LETTERS OF COMMENDATION NOT REQUIRED BY PAUL
 — The Corinthians were Paul's letter of recommendation. He needed no ecclesial documentation, as his detractors insisted.
- 3:4-5^a MINISTERS OF THE NEW COVENANT — CONFIDENCE IN GOD, NOT SELF
 — Paul was commissioned by God — a marked contrast to the Judaising pedlers of God's word.

THE MINISTRATION OF THE 'SPIRIT', SUPERIOR TO THAT OF THE LAW

- 3:5^b The temporary, transient design of the Law contrasted to the enduring nature of the new covenant.
- 3:6 SUPERIORITY OF THE 'SPIRIT' IN RESPECT TO LIFE
 — The Letter "killed", the "Spirit" made alive.
- 3:7-11 SUPERIORITY IN RESPECT TO SPLENDOUR
 — The fading splendour of the Mosaic Law (as indicated by the fading glory in Moses' face) contrasted to the surpassing splendour of the new covenant.
- 3:12 Boldness is generated by such a hope.
- 3:13-18 THE VEIL-GLORY ALLEGORY

MOSES (LETTER) NATURAL ISRAEL	CHRIST (SPIRIT) SPIRITUAL ISRAEL
— veil over face	— open face-view
— glory abolished	— reflected, progressive glory
	— changed from one stage to another
— minds blinded until unveiling	— Christ lifts veil, glory shines in the heart
— bondage	— freedom

3:1-3 LETTERS OF COMMENDATION NOT REQUIRED BY PAUL

3:1 *“Do we begin again to commend ourselves?” —*

“Commend” = “to set together” (Yg), “to exhibit” (Strg). “We” either refers to Paul and his travel companions who laboured at Corinth—Timothy, Titus, Silas, Luke (and Tychicus? “our brother” 8:22) or Paul himself (cf. 2 Cor. 13:2).

“Again”, suggests that Paul had been accused by his detractors of commending himself. (Notice how he returns to this same point, 2 Cor. 5:12). Paul replied to those who would examine him in 1 Cor. 4:3-17 pointing out that he was Messiah’s “huperetes” — “an under-rower” (Yg), responsible only to his Master. In 2 Cor. 10:12 he again refers to the charge, pointing out to the Corinthians a contrast between himself and his detractors: “Not that we venture to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves. But when they measure themselves with one another, and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding” (10:12, R.S.V.)

“or need we, as some [others], epistles of commendation to you, or [letters] of commendation from you?” —

The “some others” undoubtedly refers to ecclesial Judaizers (cf. 1 Cor. 9:2, 12; 2 Cor. 11:22). It was customary for travelling brethren to carry a letter of recommendation from their home ecclesia, or to be accompanied by brethren of well-known integrity in the Truth to introduce the less known brethren to the new ecclesia (see Acts 15:25-27; 18:27; Rom. 16:1; Col. 4:10).

The Judaizers at Corinth evidently could produce letters from other ecclesias (Jerusalem?) and had received letters of commendation FROM the Corinthians. Paul’s rejoinder in 3:1-3 suggests that the detractors attempted to erode Paul’s authority at Corinth by arguing that he could produce no such letters.

3:2 *“Ye are our epistle” —*

The CORINTHIANS were Paul’s letter of recommendation. They were the “sphragis” (seal) of his apostleship in the Lord (1 Cor. 9:2). As someone once expressed it in contemporary terms: “You might be the only Bible some people read”. The changed lives of many of the Corinthians were the result of God’s work through His Apostolic minister, yet the Corinthians had desired proof that Christ was speaking in him (13:3)! The required proof was evident in the power of God manifest in Paul’s ministry — the signs of an apostle wrought among them “in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds” (12:12).

“written in our hearts” -

“Written” means “to engrave, inscribe” (Stg); “engraven [‘inscribed’, Nestle] in our hearts”, Con. Ver.; “written in YOUR hearts”, R.S.V.; (mg. “other ancient authorities read ‘our’ ”). There is a difficulty in deciding whether the Corinthians were an epistle written in THEIR own hearts or PAUL’S heart. The latter view is supported by Paul’s words, “for I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and live together” (7:3, R.S.V.) This was shown by Paul’s confidence in the Corinthians.

“known [Gk: ‘ginosko’] and read of all men” —

“Read” Gk: “anaginosko”, “to know well, read” (Yg). Paul had boasted of their initial enthusiasm for the Jerusalem Poor Fund; “For I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year; and your zeal has stirred up most of them” (2 Cor. 9:2, R.S.V.). Similarly the Corinthian response to the Jerusalem Fund would be apparent to the Roman believers (Rom. 15:26), and certainly to the Jews in Jerusalem. In this way the ecclesia was a letter written in the Apostle’s heart “known and read of all men”.

The Corinthians were related to Paul as the sacrificial offering was to the priest. As Paul reminded the Romans: “. . . I [am] the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering ‘to work as a priest’, (Yg) the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable . . .” (Rom. 15:16). It is not difficult to understand then, why Paul should choose such a personal metaphor, “ye are OUR letter . . . engraven in OUR hearts”.

3:3 *“[Forasmuch as ye are] manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us” —*

“And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us”, R.S.V.; “dispensed by us” Con. Ver. “Ministered” = “attendance, service, minister”, (Stg).

The Corinthians were a letter written by Christ and delivered by his ministers — the apostles. They did not “lack behind” in the distribution of the Spirit-gifts, transmitted by the laying on of the Apostles’ hands (e.g. Acts 8:13-20; 2 Tim. 1:6). The Corinthians were “enriched in him [Christ] with all speech and all knowledge” (I Cor. 1:5, 6). They were instructed by Paul himself (1:18, 19; I Cor. 11:16, 23 — “For I [Paul] have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you.”)

“written not with ink but with the spirit of the living God;” —

How was this accomplished? In what way were the Corinthians engraved by the Spirit of the living God? By the following:

1. The Gospel which was the POWER of God (Rom. 1:16) and was conveyed through the Apostles (2 Cor. 5:18-21). This enlightenment effected a metamorphosis — a “new creation”, (2 Cor. 5:17).
2. By the direct operation of the Spirit through gifted men in the ecclesia, e.g. prophecy, teaching and revelation which would inscribe the Divine instruction upon the fleshy tablets of the heart (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-11).
3. By the influence of apostolic example (2 Cor. 1:7; cf. I Tim. 4:16; I Cor. 11:1).
4. By the superintending influence of Divine providence (Acts 18:10).

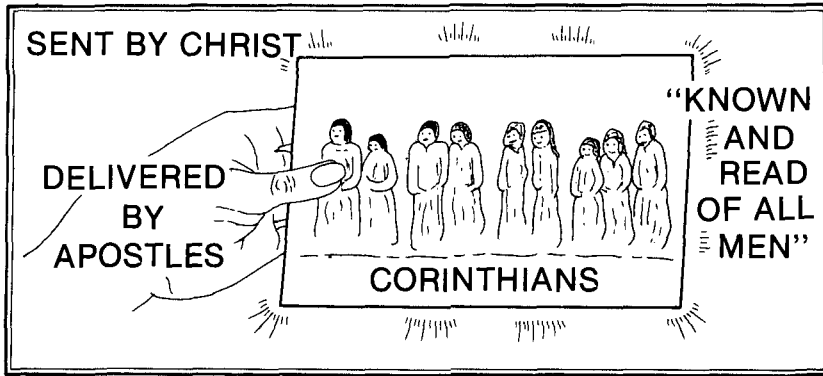
“not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.” —

“Tables”, Gk: “plax”, “a broad slab or table [used of ten commandments, Heb. 9:4]” (Yg); “tablets”, R.S.V.; Nestle; Con. Ver. “Fleshy” = “similar to flesh, soft”, (Stg). The implication here is not that the hearts are

fleshly—i.e., carnal, but rather fleshly—i.e., soft, and therefore receptive to inscription (in contrast to the impervious nature of the tablets of stone).

Note how the Apostle chooses “tables of stone” rather than parchment or papyri, (as would be expected with “ink”), because it introduces the contrast which is to follow between the “Letter” and “Spirit” — the position of the Judaizer and the Apostle. The very words of Jer. 31:33 and Prov. 7:3 were being fulfilled.

THE METAPHOR SUMMARISED



3:4-5 MINISTERS OF THE NEW COVENANT — CONFIDENCE IN GOD, NOT SELF

3:4 *“And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:” —*

“Trust”, Gk: “*pepoithesis*”, “reliance, confidence, trust” (Stg); “confidence”. R.S.V.; Nestle; Con. Ver.

Paul is referring to the ministry of reconciliation of which he is a custodian. This is indicated by reading verse 6 immediately after verse 4. (Verse 5 is parenthetical).

3:5 *“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; [to claim anything as coming from us’, R.S.V.] but our sufficiency is of God” —*

“Sufficient”=“competent”, Nestle; Con. Ver., “Think”=“computation, reason, thought”, (Strg); “to reckon”; Nestle; Con. Ver.; “to claim”, R.S.V. This verse is parenthetical as indicated in the CONCORDANT VERSION. Paul is here disclaiming any personal competence for the exalted office to spread the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ (2:14 R.S.V.). He was “commissioned by God” (2:17), unlike the Judaizing peddlers of God’s word. Paul would only boast of his weaknesses, (12:5), for it was in these that Divine strength was made perfect, (12:9). The great treasure was in earthenware vessels to show that the transcendent power belonged to God (4:7).

THE MINISTRATION OF THE “SPIRIT”, SUPERIOR TO THAT OF THE “LAW”

Paul now proceeds to attack the position of the Judaizer by clear contrasts between the temporary, transient design of the Law and the enduring, eternal nature of the new covenant. These contrasts are set out as follows:—

THE LETTER

- chiselled in stone
- letter kills
- had a fading splendour
- dispensation of condemnation
- transient, fading
- veil retained
- bondage

THE SPIRIT

- written and engraven on fleshy tablets of human hearts
- spirit gives life
- greater splendour
- dispensation of righteousness
- permanent
- veil lifted
- freedom

3:6 SUPERIORITY IN RESPECT TO LIFE

3:6 “*Who also hath made us [‘qualified us’, R.S.V.] able ministers*”
[Gk: ‘*diakonos*’, ‘*dispensers*’, *Con Ver.*] —

Gk: “*hikanos*”, “coming up to” (Yg); “competent”, Nestle; *Con. Ver.* (“*Hikanos*”, is translated “sufficient”, “sufficiency” in verse 5). To this point in the epistle Paul has been concerned with a defence of his PERSONAL integrity as a divinely commissioned “dispenser” of the gospel. He now shows that the DISPENSATION or content of his ministry is far superior to that of the Mosaic Law claimed by the Judaizers to be binding upon Corinthian converts (cf. 2 Cor. 11).

“*of [‘the’ not in Gk. text] new testament;*” —

“Testament” = “dispensation, full arrangement” (Yg); “covenant”, R.S.V.; Nestle; *Con. Ver.* The NEW covenant was in fact the “old” Abrahamic covenant granting the forgiveness of sins on the basis of faith which PRECEDED the Mosaic Law given at Sinai through angelic mediation (cf. Acts 3:25, 26; Heb. 8:12, 13; see Heb. 9). It was “new” in that it was ratified by the death of Christ (see Heb. 9:11-17).

“*not of the letter*” —

“Letter” = “a letter, anything written” (Yg); “not in a written code”, R.S.V.; by metonymy “letter” stands for the “Mosaic Law”. Moses was instructed to hew two tables of stone. God then wrote on the tables “the words of the covenant, the ten commandments” (Exod. 34:1, 28). The two tablets were subsequently placed in the ark by Moses (Deut. 10:1).

Many religionists such as the Seventh Day Adventists and Herbert Armstrong insist on the observance of the ten commandments as requisites for acceptable worship before God. For such it is important to point out that the old covenant = the ten commandments (Deut. 4:13; 9:9-11; Heb. 8:13), which

waxed old like a garment and passed away. As Paul points out here (2 Cor. 3), the old covenant was a ministration of DEATH. Death was the reward for disobedience; the Law carried no promise of life eternal (Gal. 2:16, 21; 3:21).

“but of the Spirit”; —

The new dispensation is spoken of as “the Spirit” for the following reasons:

1. The early preaching of the Gospel by Peter at Pentecost was preceded by the receiving of the Spirit, as promised by Christ (Acts 1:5-8; 2:1-18).
2. Converts to the Truth were instructed by the Spirit, manifested through Spirit-gifted teachers, prophets, apostles and tongue-speakers (I Cor. 12).
3. The Holy Spirit enabled the preachers of the Gospel to attest to the validity of their message by the “signs” — miracles, that were performed (Mk.. 16:17-20; Heb. 2:4; e.g., Acts 19:11-12; 28:3-6).
4. The working of God’s Holy Spirit power provided an “earnest” — surety or pledge, of what God would do in the future (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5).

“for the letter killeth” —

“Killeth” = “to kill entirely” (Yg). It is important at this stage to see why the letter — the Mosaic Law “killed entirely”.

1. There were two weaknesses in the Law:
 - (a) **No one could keep it:** “For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed be every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them’ ” (Gal. 3:10, R.S.V.). Even Christ was cursed by the law in the mode of his death — “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Gal. 3:13 cf. Deut. 21:22-23). He was cursed by the Law, but with a basic difference from all others — He was sinless.
 - (b) **It had an intrinsic inability to grant eternal life:** — “by works of the law shall no one be justified” (Gal. 2:16, R.S.V.). “for if justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose”¹ (Gal. 2:21, R.S.V.).
“For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law” (Gal. 3:21).
2. Since no Jew but Jesus was wholly obedient, all Jews were cursed by the Mosaic Law. As long as the Law remained operative, so did the curse, for none were capable of perfect obedience. The curse could only be effectively removed by the abolition of the Law itself. This was accomplished in the sacrifice of Christ which REMOVED the Law, and hence the curse which was specially borne by the Jew — opening to the Gentile the blessings of the Abrahamic promises (cf. Gal. 3:13, 14). But at Corinth, Judaisers were seducing Gentile converts from this gospel and insisting on

¹It might be asked of what value was it for Christ to have kept the law if it did not confer eternal life even in his case? Without perfect obedience on his part to the Law of Moses, righteousness could not justly be imputed to those who could not keep it (and so were unjust). He offered himself without spot to God, therefore his blood purges our conscience (Heb. 9:14), and by it we are justified, or declared righteous, our faith being counted for righteousness for his sake (Rom. 5:9; 4:5).

Mosaic Law-keeping which could only bring DEATH — all who sought justification by it were cursed, not blessed! Hence the letter “killed entirely”.

“but the spirit giveth life” —

“Life” = “vitalise, make alive” (Stg). The “Spirit” is again used metonymically for the “dispensation of the Spirit” and relates to the great promise of forgiveness of sins through faith and the imputation of righteousness to LIFE ETERNAL. The dispensation of the Spirit was a “ministration of righteousness” — a better covenant because it was established on better promises (Heb. 8:6). One of these “better promises” is the “promise of ETERNAL inheritance” (Heb. 9:15). This was fundamentally different from the Covenant at Sinai which promised continued blessings in mortal life, (e.g. Lev. 18:5; Ex. 20:12), but not eternal life.

3:7-11 SUPERIORITY IN RESPECT TO SPLENDOUR

3:7 *“But if the ministration of death” —*

“Ministration” = “dispensation”, R.S.V.; Con. Ver. It was a ministration of death for the reasons given in comments on 3:6.

“written [‘letters’, R.S.V., Nestle] and engraven in stones” —

This passage further identifies the ten commandments with the “old covenant” since it was only the ten commandments which were spoken of as “chiselled in stone”. The old covenant was a ministration OF death, not a ministration which CAUSED death. The cause of death was SIN which the law made evident. The Law itself was “holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Rom. 7:7, 12-13).

“was glorious” —

‘came with such splendour’, R.S.V.

“so that the children [‘sons’, Nestle] could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory [‘brightness’, R.S.V.] of his countenance;” —

“Stedfastly behold” = “to look intently”, (Yg). Paul alludes to Ex. 34:30. The “ministration of death” — the giving of the ten commandments was accompanied with a splendour which was so awesome that the Israelites were afraid to come near Moses (Ex. 34:30).

“which [glory] was to be done away:” —

“Done away” = “to make useless”, (Yg); “fading as it was”, R.S.V.; “being done away”, Nestle.

3:8 *“How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?” —*

“Will not the dispensation of the Spirit be attended with greater splendour?”, R.S.V. Paul argues in effect as follows: Seeing that the dispensations are different, the “letter” being transient, and resulting only in death, then the dispensation of the “Spirit”—a new covenant which brings life, will be accompanied with far greater splendour.

3:9 *“For if the ministration of condemnation be glory much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory” —*

“For if there was splendour in the dispensation of condemnation, the dispensation of righteousness must far exceed it in splendour”, R.S.V.

“Condemnation” means an adverse sentence, (the verdict); “condemning” (Yg).

Paul answers the question of verse 8 with an important addition. The dispensation of the Spirit is a ministration “of righteousness” because its adherents are servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:19). Their righteousness is obtained apart from the works of the law, (Gal. 3:21), being imputed to them on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:21, 22).

It is, of course, obvious that Paul is comparing the PHYSICAL glory which accompanied the giving of the Mosaic Law with the MORAL glory of the “Spirit”.

3:10 *“For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect,” —*

“Respect”, Gk: “meros”, “a part, particular” (Yg); “in this case”, R.S.V.

“by reason of the glory that excelleth” —

“Reason” = “for the sake of” (Yg). “Excelleth” = “to cast beyond, surpass” (Yg), “Indeed, in this case, what once had splendour has come to have no splendour at all, because of the splendour that surpasses it” R.S.V.

Paul makes a relative comparison of “Law” and “Spirit” on the basis of glory (splendour). Despite the dazzling and awesome glory which radiated from Moses’ face (symbolic of the Law), it paled into insignificance, totally eclipsed, alongside the surpassing splendour of the dispensation of the Spirit.

3:11 *“For if that which is done away was glorious” —*

“Done away” = “to make useless” (Yg); “For if what faded away came with splendour”, R.S.V.

“much more that which remaineth is glorious” —

“What is permanent must have much more splendour”, R.S.V. The difference of prepositions (was, is) in this verse should not be overlooked. The ministration of the Old Covenant was only WITH a transient flush of glory, but that of the New Covenant abides IN glory.

3:12 *“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech,” —*

“Plainness” = “boldness”, (Yg); “we are very bold”, R.S.V. The hope was centred in a PERMANENT dispensation of righteousness, therefore Paul preached Jesus Christ as Lord (4:5) by the “open statement of the truth” (4:2, R.S.V.). “Of speech” does not occur in the Greek text and is deleted by R.S.V.; Nestle.

3:13-18 THE VEIL-GLORY ALLEGORY

3:13 *"And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished [might not see the end of the fading splendour', R.S.V.]"* —

"Veil" = "a covering, veil", (Yg). "Stedfastly behold" = "to look intently" (Yg), "gaze", Nestle.

"Abolished" means "to make thoroughly inactive", (Yg). Paul alludes to Ex. 34:33 — "and till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face". This is a defective translation. It suggests that Moses veiled his face when speaking to the Israelites (on account of the terror which the glory aroused, cf. vs. 30). The R.S.V. reads "WHEN Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face". (The R.V. also gives "when" rather than "till", A.V.). The fear aroused by the glory was overcome by Moses talking with the people (Exod. 34:31), whereas the purpose of the veil (which was put on when Moses finished speaking) was not to conceal the glory, but its evanescence — its fading splendour. The reason for this must have been to prevent the Israelites from viewing the Law as prematurely terminating and because of this treating it with disrespect.

3:14 *"but their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament;"* —

"Blinded", Gk: "poroo", "to harden", (Yg);¹ "hardened", R.S.V.; Nestle; "calloused", Con. Ver.

King sin, "the god of this world", (4:4), had blinded the eyes of Jewry in mistakenly viewing the transient glory of the old dispensation as an abiding the veil when God spoke to him; similarly, the veil must be uplifted from for righteousness (Rom. 10:4) — righteousness being acquired only IN him (2 Cor. 5:21).

3:15 *"But even unto this day, when Moses is read, [the, 'a', R.S.V.; Nestle] veil is [lies', R.S.V.; Nestle] upon their heart [minds', R.S.V.]"* —

In the first century, "Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day" (Acts 15:21), but the veil on Moses' face had become a veil upon the heart of the Jews. Moses lifted the veil when God spoke to him; similarly, the veil must be uplifted from natural Israel for God to speak to them through Jesus the Christ (cf. Rom. 11:25-26). This was impossible while they remained "stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears", always resisting the Holy Spirit as did their fathers (Acts 7:51, cf. Deut. 29:4).

¹Poroo rightly describes a person blinded by cataracts caused by the hardening of the crystalline lens of the eye into a chalky substance. See J. Lias (ed.), *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1897), p.30.

3:16 *"Nevertheless when it [‘a man’, R.S.V.] shall turn to the Lord,
the veil shall be taken away [‘is removed’, R.S.V.]” —*

“Taken away” = “to take round about” (Yg); “the covering is taken from about it”, Con. Ver. The veiled mind can only be unveiled by turning to Christ. Paul is here paraphrasing Ex. 34:34.

3:17 *“Now the Lord is that Spirit:” —*

It cannot be definitely proven whether “Lord” refers to God (the parallel in the allegory — Moses removed the veil when he spoke with Yahweh) or to Christ. In support of the latter is the following:

- “turn to the Lord” (vs. 16) clearly refers to Jesus Christ.
- “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord” (2 Cor. 4:5).
- “to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ” (4:6).

“Spirit” stands for the “dispensation of the Spirit” (3:6) in which the Spirit of the Living God is the active agent or power by which the Divine instruction is engraven upon the fleshy tablets of the heart (3:3). God’s Holy Spirit power operated through Spirit-gifted men in the ecclesias (1 Cor. 12). These teachers elucidated Old Testament Scriptures, and gave to the ecclesia the New Testament Scriptures.

“and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” —

“Liberty” = “freedom” (Yg); R.S.V. The freedom is to gaze with unveiled face upon the glory of God revealed in Christ through the Gospel (see Jn. 8:32; 2 Cor. 3:6, 8, 11).

3:18 *“But we all, with open [‘unveiled’, R.S.V.; Nestle] face beholding
as in a glass the glory of the Lord,” —*

“We all” = baptised believers in the new covenant, in contrast to the Judaizer. “Beholding” = “to see in a mirror” (Yg); “beholding in a mirror” Nestle; Con. Ver. The Lord grants the freedom to gaze on the glory of God reflected in the mirror — Christ Jesus, (through the gospel). The Judaizer with his veiled mind was unable to see the “glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God” (4:4). As Paul exhorted the Galatians: “stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1). Moses reflected the glory of God’s presence on his face, so must the believer, as a new creation, (5:17) reflect the moral excellency of his Saviour in a changed life.

*“are changed into the same image from glory [Gk: ‘doxe’] to glory
[Gk: ‘doxe’],” —*

“Changed”, Gk: “metamorphoomai”, “to change one’s form”, (Yg).

“Image” = “image, likeness” (Yg).

Moses’ glory was fading and transient, but Jesus, the greater than Moses the Law-Giver, provides the dynamic power for the believers to progress from one stage of glory to another. This is acquired by maturity in the Spirit-word. The

inner man must be renewed daily to progress from “childhood” in Christ to “manhood” (see Heb. 5:11-14; I Cor. 14:20) — one stage of glory to another.

“even as by the Spirit of the Lord” —

¹ — The Spirit of the Lord is a comprehensive expression conveying the many ways in which God accomplishes His work of fashioning His sons and daughters into the image of His Son. See note on 3:3. Hence, “for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit”, R.S.V.

¹For an alternative suggestion as to the identification of Lord see “The Spirit — An Exposition of New Testament Usage” available from the Christadelphian Scripture Study Service.

2 CORINTHIANS 4

This chapter is a continuation of the argument of chapter 3. The break does not occur until 4:6. It must be remembered that the contrasts of “spirit” and “letter” are continued and that chapter 4:1-6 consists of implications which Paul draws for his ministry. It is probably a safe inference that the contrasts are between Paul’s conduct and that of his Judaising detractors:

HE SPURNS	HE PRACTISES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — disgraceful, underhanded way — refuses to practise cunning — does not tamper with God’s word 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — the open statement of the truth — commends himself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

“Great treasure in earthenware vessels”

- 4:1-2 PAUL’S APOSTOLIC MINISTRY ACCOMPANIED BY PERSONAL INTEGRITY.
- 4:3-4 THE GLORY OF THE GOSPEL — HIDDEN TO SIN-VEILED JUDAISERS.
- 4:5-7 APOSTOLIC PREACHING IS NOT SELF-COMMENDATION.
- vs. 6 (a) Metaphor of creation light.
— God gives enlightenment.
- vs. 7 (b) Metaphor of an earthenware vessel.
— The treasure comes from God.
- vs. 8-9 (c) God gives sufficiency to His ministers.
— The metaphor of a soldier — wounded but not defeated.
- 4:10-12 DYING, YET LIVING: The death and life of Christ manifested in Paul’s mortal body.
- 4:13-18 PAUL’S MANIFEST FAITH IN RESURRECTION TO LIFE.
- vs.17-18 Present afflictions considered “weightless” in comparison with the eternal weight of glory in the Kingdom.

4:1 *“Therefore [seeing] we have this ministry; —*

“Ministry” = “dispensation”, Con. Ver. This was the ministry of reconciliation (5:18).

“as we have received mercy” —

The mercy is related to his ministry, hence: “therefore having this ministry by the mercy of God” R.S.V. (Cf. I Cor. 15:9, 10; Eph. 3:8). Paul is careful at every turn to emphasise that his ministry was not arrogated (as the Judaisers argued, 12:1-2; 13:3; 11:12-15), but rather was granted by Divine favour.

“we faint not” —

“Faint” means “to turn out badly, cave in” (Yg). The same word occurs in vs. 16, “for which cause we faint not”; “we do not lose heart”, R.S.V. Paul had learned that Divine power was made complete in human weakness. He could write: “I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities: for when I am weak, then I am strong”, (12:9, 10, R.S.V.).

4:2 *“But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty” —*

“Renounced” = “to speak off, or away” (Yg); “spurn”, Con. Ver; literally to “say no to”. “Hidden things” = “under-handed ways”, R.S.V.

“Dishonesty” = “shame” (Yg); A.V. mg; “disgraceful, underhanded ways” R.S.V.

Paul again vindicates his character against charges of insincerity of purpose (1:12-14; 10:2-4). Such conduct was an apt description of the crafty conduct of the Judaisers who were deceiving the Corinthians as the serpent did Eve (11:1-6).

“not walking in craftiness” —

“Walking” = “to walk around (Yg).

“Craftiness”, “unscrupulousness” (Yg). “We refuse to practise cunning” R.S.V. Paul commented on the gullible character of the Corinthians: “For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves! For you bear it if a man takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face” (11:19-20, R.S.V.).

“nor handling the word of God deceitfully” —

“Handling” = “to use deceit” (Yg); “adulterate”, Nestle; Con. Ver. “Or to tamper with God’s word” R.S.V. Such was the practice of Paul’s detractors — “false apostles, deceitful workmen disguising themselves as apostles of Christ” (11:13 R.S.V.) They were mere pedlers—hucksters of God’s word (cf. 2:17).

“but by manifestation of the truth” —

“Manifestation”, Gk: “phanerosis” — “open statement” R.S.V. Such an

open declaration of the whole counsel of God was mandatory since a belief of the truth is essential for salvation (2 Thess. 2:13).

“commending ourselves to every man’s conscience” —

“Commending” = “to set together” (Yg). Paul required no letter of commendation from the Jerusalem Ecclesia as the Judaisers demanded (3:1), since his credentials were evidenced in his demeanour and “open statement of the truth” (cf. 5:12; 10:12, 18; 12:11).

“in the sight of God” —

“before God”, Nestle. Paul was conscious that the judgment would disclose the secret purposes of the heart (I Cor. 4:4, 5). What mattered, therefore, was to exhibit “unsullied brightness” to the gaze of God’s watchers — the angels (cf. I Cor. 4:9). Although Paul had never, by design, set out to be a mere man-pleaser as his detractors alleged (cf. Gal. 1:10), he nevertheless aimed “at what is honourable not only in the Lord’s sight but also in the sight of men” (as in the Jerusalem Poor Fund, 8:21 R.S.V.).

4:3-4 GOSPEL HIDDEN TO SIN-VEILED JUDAISERS

4:3 *“But if our gospel be hid” —*

“Hid” = “covered”, Con. Ver.; “veiled”, R.S.V. If the splendour of the gospel was veiled to some (cf. 3:14) the failure rested with the unbeliever, not the gospel. The “god”, “sin”, had blinded their eyes.

“In whom the god of this world [Gk: ‘aion’, ‘age’ (Yg)]” —

This passage is wrested by religionists such as the “Jehovah’s Witnesses” in support of their belief that Satan, the devil, is the “god of this system of things”. Against this view consider the following:

1. Paul cannot be teaching the existence of a god opposed to Yahweh since earlier he stated that there is only ONE God: “For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth — as indeed there are many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords’ — yet for us there is ONE God, the Father” (I Cor. 8:5, 6 R.S.V.).
2. The ‘god’ of this passage cannot be an angel since its activities are evil — i.e. blinding the minds of those who believe not. Notice the logic of the following:

The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).

But angels CANNOT DIE (Lk. 20:35, 36; Heb. 2:14-16).

Therefore, angels cannot sin.

3. “God of this age” is a parallel expression to “prince of this world”; literally “ruler of this world [Gk: kosmos].” (Jn. 12:31; 16:11). Jesus said “NOW shall the prince of this world be cast out” (Jn. 12:31). But this time the crucifixion squares neither with the J.W. teaching that Satan was cast out in a great war in 1914, nor with the general view of the apostasy that Satan was cast out BEFORE the fall of man. The

“prince of this world” which had nothing in Christ was SIN. The outward appearances in the death of Christ were deceptive, since it appeared as if he were condemned, when it was sin which was cast out and condemned (Rom. 8:3). This personification of sin as a “god”, “prince”, etc. is common in Scripture. Note the following:

- i. Sin is a “master” who pays wages (Rom. 6:23).
 - ii. Sin is a “slave-owner” from whom men are emancipated that they might serve God (Rom. 6:17).
 - iii. Sin is a “reigning monarch” (Rom. 5:21).
 - iv. Sin is an “indweller” with men (Rom. 7:17).
4. Eph. 2:2, 3, provide a further commentary. “Prince of the power of the air” is identified with “sin”. “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to:
- the course [Gk: aion] of this world [Gk: kosmos].
 - the prince [Gk: archon] of the power [Gk: exousia] of the air [Gk: aeros].
 - the spirit “that now worketh in the children of disobedience”.

“hath blinded the minds of them which believe not” —

“Blinded”, Gk: = “to blind” (Yg).

“Minds” = “thought” (Yg); “Blinds the apprehensions” Con. Ver.

“Believe not” = “untrusting” (Yg); “unbelieving”, Nestle.

“lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ” —

The glory relates to Christ, not the gospel in this passage: “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” R.S.V.; R.V., and supported by Nestle; Con. Ver.

“who is the image of God” —

“Image” = “likeness” (Yg); R.S.V. Christ is a manifested representation, not physically but morally in his character (cf. Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18).

“should shine unto them” —

“Shine” = “to beam forth” (Yg); “illumination”, Con. Ver. The glory beamed forth in contrast to the “fading splendour” of Moses’ glory (3:13).

King Sin had claimed slaves in the Judaisers, veiling their hearts and minds.

4:5-7 APOSTOLIC PREACHING IS NOT SELF-COMMENDATION

4:5 *“For we preach not ourselves” —*

“Preach” means “to cry or proclaim as a herald” (Yg). Paul had no desire to be the leader of a party faction at Corinth (I Cor. 1:14-17), nor was he prepared to engage in self-commendation as did his detractors. “It is not the

man who commends himself that is accepted, but the man whom the Lord commends" (10:12). Paul rather "gloried" in his weaknesses knowing that in such, God's strength was made complete (12:10).

"but Christ Jesus the Lord" —

i.e., "Christ Jesus as Lord, not ourselves".

"and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake" —

"Servants" = "a slave" (Yg). Would one interested in self-commendation consider himself a SLAVE of the Corinthian believers for Jesus' sake?

4:6 METAPHOR OF CREATION LIGHT

4:6 *"For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness" —*

An extended metaphor is drawn from Gen. 1:3-5. The light of God's creating initiated regeneration on an earth which was a "ruin" and "empty" ("without form and void" Gen. 1:2, A.V.). Likewise, the enlightenment which came from the gospel regenerated perishing man, formerly alienated from the life of God through ignorance (Eph. 4:18). The result was a "new creation" (5:17).

"hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God" —

"Light" = "light", "illumination" (Yg); "enlightenment", Nestle. The whole enterprise was DIVINE. It left no room for self-commendation, but rather thanksgiving.

It is important to realise that enlightenment has an intellectual component — knowledge. The transforming of one's mind which this knowledge generates, is gradual — "from glory to glory" (3:18). It requires attention to the "more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well to take heed, as unto a light which shineth in a dark place" (2 Pet. 1:19).

"in the face of Christ" —

In Christ all the promises of God are "yes" (1:20). "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (5:19), hence the light of knowledge of the glory of God is embodied in him. As Jesus said, "I am the light of the world: He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (Jn. 8:12).

4:7 METAPHOR OF AN EARTHENWARE VESSEL

4:7 *"We have this treasure in earthen vessels" —*

The treasure is the enlightenment of the knowledge of the glory of God (4:6). The allusion here is to the ancient custom of storing gold and silver in earthenware pots.¹

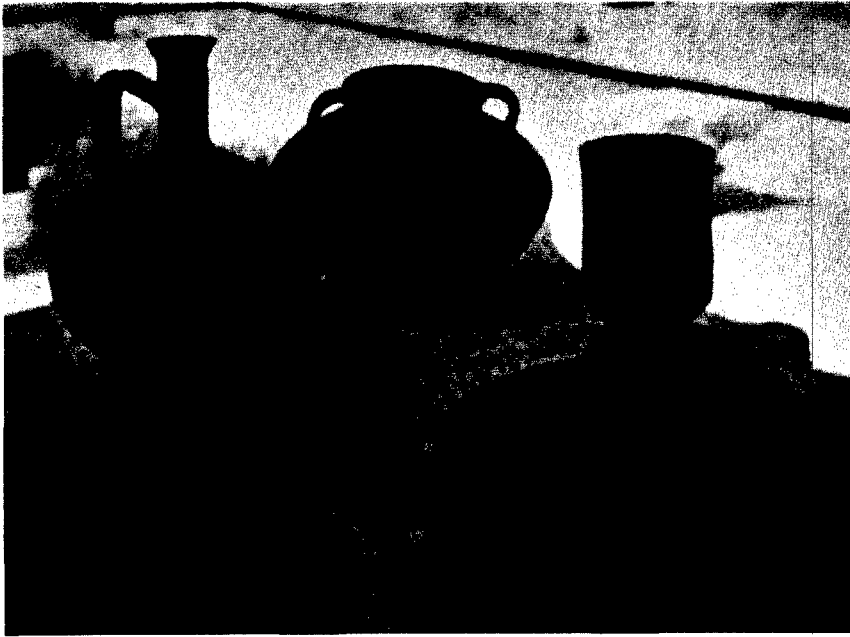
¹See W. Nicoll (ed.), *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, Vol. III, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910), p.61.

“Earthen” = “made of earthenware” (Yg). “Vessel”, Gk: “skevos”, “a vessel, utensil, instrument” (Yg). Such vessels were made of clay having neither the beauty nor the strength of vessels made of bronze, silver, or gold. They were rough in appearance, and could easily be chipped, cracked or broken — fitting symbols for the frailty of man’s mortal nature.

“that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us” —

“Excellency” = “a casting beyond, surpassing” (Yg); “transcendent” (R.S.V.; Con. Ver.).

“Power” = “ability, power” (Yg). Self-commendation was inconceivable with an “outer nature wasting away” (4:16). The only sufficiency the Apostle could claim, came from God Himself (2:16).



EARTHENWARE VESSELS—Fitting symbols of the frailty of human nature (see v.7).

4:8-18 GOD GIVES SUFFICIENCY TO HIS MINISTERS

In this section of the chapter Paul sets out the way in which the transcendent power overcomes the disabilities of probation. Opponents may have regarded Paul’s infirmities as evidence against his apostolic authority (cf. 10:10), but not so Paul himself, for in his weakness, God afforded proof of the divine power of the Gospel.

4:8-9 METAPHOR OF A SOLDIER

In these two verses the apostle presents himself as a soldier locked in combat with an apparently strong foe, and nearly suffering defeat. In four pairs of antithetical contrasts he describes his condition. These are as follows:

— in every direction pressed hard	— but not hemmed in
— bewildered	— but not utterly despairing
— pursued	— but not forsaken (i.e., abandoned to the pursuing foe)
— struck down (as by an arrow)	— but not destroyed

4:8 “[We are] troubled on every side yet not distressed” —

“Troubled” means to press, squeeze, afflict (Yg); “We are afflicted in every way” R.S.V. While in Macedonia when writing this epistle, he experienced “fightings without” and “afflictions at every turn” (7:5, R.S.V.).

“Distressed” = “to put in a strait space” (Yg); “crushed”, R.S.V.; “restrained” Nestle.



Roman Soldiers fighting barbarians.

“[We are] perplexed, but not in [‘driven to’, R.S.V.] despair” —

“Perplexed” = “to be perplexed, without a passage” (Yg).

“Despair” = “to have no outlet whatever” (Yg); “to be utterly at a loss” (Stg). The afflictions Paul experienced in Asia were so devastating that Paul

“despaired of LIFE itself” (1:8). “Why we felt that we had received the sentence of death; but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead” (1:11 R.S.V.) There is a play on the antithetical Greek words which in English is much like “at our wits end, but not out of our wits”.

4:9 *“Persecuted, but not forsaken”* —

“Persecuted”= “to pursue” (Yg). “Forsaken”= “to leave down in” (Yg); “left behind” R.V. mg; “deserted” Nestle. Paul was pursued as by an enemy, but not abandoned to the pursuing foe (cf. I Cor. 4:12).

“cast down, but not destroyed” —

“Cast down”= “to cast down” (Yg); “struck down” R.S.V. Paul was struck down as with an arrow in combat or wrestling, but not deprived of life (cf. 1:9, 10) and therefore able to renew the conflict.

4:10-11 DYING, YET LIVING: THE DEATH AND LIFE OF CHRIST MANIFESTED IN PAUL’S MORTAL BODY

4:10 *“Always bearing about in the body the dying of [the Lord] Jesus; —*

“Bearing about”= “carrying” R.S.V.; Con. Ver. “Dying” ‘ “a putting to death” (Yg); “the death” R.S.V. The word is only found in one other place, Rom. 14:19, where it signifies the process by which a thing became dead; literally, “making a corpse”.

The same wickedness that resulted in Christ’s death was at work in the adversaries against his ambassadors. Their sufferings were like slaying him anew.

4:11 *“that the life [Gk: zoe] of Jesus might be manifest in our mortal flesh”*

These two verses have a parallel structure:

VS. 10	VS. 11
— always	— For we which live are alway
— bearing about in the body the dying of [the Lord] Jesus	— delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake.
— that the life also of Jesus	— that the life also of Jesus
— might be manifest in our body	— might be made manifest in our mortal flesh

The parallel makes it apparent to “bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus” was to be “delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake.”

4:12 *“So then death worketh in us”* —

“Worketh”= “to work in” (Yg); “operates”, Nestle “death is at work in us”, R.S.V. Notice the parallel expressions:

I Cor. 15:31 — “I die daily”

Rom. 8:36 — “For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”

Phil. 3:10 — “the fellowship [Gk: koinonia] of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death”.

Col. 1:24 — “my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind [‘lacking’, R.S.V.] of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the ecclesia”.

Paul shared Christ’s sufferings (1:5) through the afflictions in his ministry which were putting him to death. But such were for the comfort of the Corinthians (1:5).

“but life in you” —

The Corinthians unwittingly (?) were adding to Paul’s burdens — “the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the ecclesias” (11:28 R.S.V.). The issues were life or death for the Corinthians, hence while Paul was “dying”, they were “living”. As Paul earlier had ironically written: “Already you are filled! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you! For I think that God has exhibited us Apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death” (I Cor. 4:8, 9, R.S.V.).

The expressions, “for if we have been united with him in a death like his” (Rom. 6:5, R.S.V.); “now if we be dead with Christ” (Rom. 5:8) are verbally SIMILAR, but refer to death to sin in baptism while the former references refer to ACTUAL bodily suffering in the flesh.

4:13-18 PAUL’S MANIFEST FAITH IN RESURRECTION TO LIFE

4:13 *“We have the same spirit of faith, according as it is written” —*

Paul quotes from the experience of Hezekiah in Psa. 116:10 as having the same spirit (disposition) of faith.

“I believed, and therefore have I spoken: we also believe, and therefore speak” —

“Believed”, “believe” = “to adhere to, trust, rely on” (Yg).

The Psalm is Messianic; probably having a primary application to Hezekiah’s deliverance from death (cf. Isa. 38). Note the following:

1. Jonah (a type of Christ in his death and resurrection) either quotes or alludes to Psa. 116:17-18 cf. Jonah 2:9.
2. Psa. 116:16 is almost certainly a prophecy of Christ’s birth by Mary (cf. Lk. 1:38).
3. The Psalm commemorates Hezekiah’s deliverance from certain death (from the leprous boil? Psa. 116:14), and foreshadows Christ’s prayer

in Gethsemane and “deliverance” by the ministration of God’s angel (cf. Lk. 22:43).

4. Hezekiah was delivered from an imminent death as was Paul (2 Cor. 1:9, 10), hence the same spirit of faith. Note the allusions to death in this Psalm:

- “the sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold on me” vs. 3.
- “I beseech thee deliver my soul” vs. 4.
- “For thou hast delivered my soul from death” vs. 8.
- “I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living” vs. 9.
- “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of all his saints” vs. 15.

Paul could well reflect upon the Psalmist’s context, “I said in my consternation, ‘Men are all a vain hope’ ” (Psa. 116:10). Paul was all too well acquainted with the fickleness of men’s allegiance apart from spiritual unity in the Truth.

4:14 *“Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus” —*

“By Jesus” should be translated “with Jesus” R.S.V.; Nestle; Con. Ver. (The preposition is “sun” = “with”, not “by” as in A.V.). Paul had faith in his own resurrection on the assured fact of Christ’s resurrection (cf. I Cor. 15:3-7). As Paul had written earlier: “But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead” (1:9).

“and shall present us with you” —

“Present” means “to set alongside” (Yg), “and bring us with you into his presence”, R.S.V. Paul would join the Corinthian believers in the presence of Christ at the resurrection, which is a clear proof against the position held by religionists that in 2 Cor. 1-7, Paul desired IMMEDIATE translation at death to be with Christ. “Absent from the body” (5:8) therefore cannot mean disembodiment, but rather the removal of the infirmities associated with mortality through clothing with immortality.

4:15 *“For all things are for your sakes that the abundance of grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.” —*

“Abundance” = “to become more, increase” (Yg); “as grace extends” R.S.V. “Many” is “majority” in Con. Ver.; Nestle.

“Redound” = “to be over and above” (Yg); “super-abounding”, Con. Ver. Time and again Paul shows his fatherly concern for the ecclesia, enduring what he does for their sakes (e.g. 1:4, 6). Left to his own choice he would desire “to depart and to be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account” (Phil. 1:23, 24, R.S.V.). If this were true for the Philippians, how much more so for the Corinthians?

4:16 *"For which cause we faint not" —*

"Faint" = "to turn out badly, cave in" (Yg); "so we do not lose heart" R.S.V.; "we are not despondent", Con. Ver.

In the sure confidence of resurrection (4:14), and the joy of giving glory through his labours (4:15), he is determined to endure all things.

"but though our outward man perish" —

"Perish", is not the Greek word "apollumi" as the A. V. translation suggests, but rather "diaphtheiro", "to corrupt thoroughly" (Yg); "is being disabled", Nestle; "Though our outer-nature is wasting away" R.S.V.; "our outward man is decaying" Con. Ver. Paul was painfully aware of the disabilities of his mortal nature. He "groaned" and longed to put on his heavenly dwelling of immortality (5:2). His bodily presence was described by his opponents as "weak" (10:10) as he suffered an embarrassing, recurrent malarial (?) condition (12:7; cf. Gal. 4:13-15). The earthenware vessel (4:7) was battered and almost worn out.

"yet the inward [man] is renewed day by day [‘every day’ R.S.V.]" —

Paul by a figure presents himself as possessing an "inner nature" R.S.V. — the spiritual man.² The "old man", or "old nature" with its practices was "put off" or crucified ritually at baptism and the "new man" in "new nature" put on which must be "renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator", (Col. 3:9, 10, R.S.V. cf. Eph. 3:16). The "inner man" must be replenished like the glory in Moses' face to progress from "glory to glory" by daily renewal.

PRESENT AFFLICTIONS—"WEIGHTLESS" IN COMPARISON WITH THE ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY IN THE KINGDOM

4:17 *"For our light affliction which is but for a moment" —*

Paul could consider his experiences ("so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself, 1:8, R.S.V.) as a "light amount" and lasting for only an instant when compared with the glory of the future.

*"worketh for us a far more [Gk: 'hyperbole'] exceeding [Gk: 'hyperbole']
and eternal weight of glory" —*

"Worketh" = "producing", Con. Ver. The construction of the sentence has a word-by-word antithesis:

light	—	weight
momentary	—	eternal (Gk; aionias)
affliction	—	glory

²This is further proven by a related passage in Eph. 4:22-24: "Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (R.S.V.).

The Concordant Version attempts to capture the repetition of “hyperbole” in English: “a transcendently transcendent eonian burden of glory”. As Paul exhorted the Roman believers: “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us (Rom. 8:18). “Weight of glory” is probably a Hebraism since the word “kab-ed”³ ‘glory’ in Hebrew is derived from the original idea of weight.

4:18 *“While we look not at [‘to’, R.S.V.] the things which are seen” —*

Those awaiting the redemption of the body do so in hope. “But hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Rom. 8:23-25).

“but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal but the things which are not seen are eternal”—

“Temporal”, Gk: “proskairos”, “for a season or time”; “temporary” Nestle; Con. Ver. “transient”, R.S.V.

The Apostle presents an apparent paradox — the things which ARE SEEN are transient, whereas the UNSEEN (requiring faith) are the substantial, enduring! Paul’s “house” in heaven was an example of such, as he proceeds in chapter 5 to show.

³“to be or become weight, honoured” (Yg). See Job. 6:3; 14:21.

2 CORINTHIANS 5

HE MADE HIM TO BE SIN, WHO KNEW NO SIN

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

- 5:1-8 THE HOUSE FROM HEAVEN DWELLING
(IMMORTALITY) CONTRASTED WITH THE EARTHLY
TENT DWELLING (MORTALITY).
- 5:9-11 THE JUDGMENT SEAT — AN INCENTIVE TO
FAITHFUL OBEDIENCE **NOW**.
- 5:12-13 SINCERITY OF PURPOSE RE-AFFIRMED (cf. 1:12).
- 5:14-17 LOVE OF CHRIST, NOT LOVE OF SELF —
THE CONTROLLING INFLUENCE.
- 5:18-21 AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST — THE MESSAGE OF
RECONCILIATION, NOT SELF-ASSUMED, BUT
DIVINELY DELEGATED.
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5:1-8 THE HOUSE FROM HEAVEN DWELLING (IMMORTALITY) CONTRASTED WITH THE EARTHLY TENT DWELLING (MORTALITY)

Paul greatly desired liberation from his tabernacle-house dwelling of mortality. The “inner man” (4:16) would then find his consummation in the edifice from heaven — immortality. In these verses Paul extends the comparison of mortality with an earthenware vessel corrupting and wasting away (4:7, 16) to a temporary house about to be broken down.

5:1 *“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved [‘destroyed’, R.S.V.; ‘demolished’ Con. Ver],” —*

I.e., if he should die; literally pulled down like a tent. Peter uses similar language (2 Peter 1:13, 14. cf. John 21:18, 19). “Earthly” = “terrestrial”, (Stg); Con. Ver. “Tabernacle” = “dwelling place” (Yg); “hut or temporary residence” (Stg).

“we have a building of [Gk: ‘ek’, ‘from’, R.S.V.] God, an house” —

This building is an edifice or architectural structure of permanence — i.e., immortality.

“not made with hands” —

“unmanufactured”, (Stg). The expression does not infer that the body of mortality is made literally with hands, but rather the comparison conveys the DIVINE aspect of immortality. (See the use of this expression in Heb. 9:11, 24).

“eternal in the heavens.” —

“Eternal”=“age lasting” (Yg). The evident meaning here is UNLIMITED duration of time in contrast with the temporary and imminent dissolution of the tabernacle-house (the mortal body).

5:2 *“For in this we groan,” —*

“Groan”=“sigh” (Yg); “to be in straits” (Stg). Paul was burdened (vs. 4) by death that was at work in him (4:12) in afflictions, persecutions, and casting down (4:8). As Paul elsewhere expressed it: “even we ourselves . . . groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies,” (Rom. 8:23, R.S.V.). To obtain this “glorious liberty” would mean freedom from “bondage to decay” (Rom. 8:21).

“earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:” —

“and long to put on our heavenly dwelling” R.S.V. Paul did not expect to go to heaven to obtain his “house”, but rather it was a heavenly dwelling (like the kingdom of HEAVEN). This dwelling would be “laid up”, “reserved” (I Pet. 1:4) for Paul, to be given “at that day” — the appearing of his Lord (2 Tim. 4:8). “Earnestly desiring”=“to desire greatly” (Yg); “longing” Con. Ver. “Clothed upon”=“put on over” (Yg); “to invest upon oneself” (Stg); “dressed” Con. Ver.

5:3 *“If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked” —*

If Paul held the doctrine of the immortality of the soul then the disembodied state would be desired to “shove off this mortal coil”. Paul had no desire to be found naked since this was the intervening period between mortality and immortality — DEATH. “Clothed”=“to go into” (Yg); “sinking into a garment” (Stg).

5:4 *“For we that are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened;” —*
See comment on verse 2.

“not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon,” —

The metaphor has changed from the tent-house dwelling to one of clothed-unclothed. The image is probably related to tentmaking (cf. Acts 18:3) since the Cilician hair-cloth could be seen in the fabric of both tents and clothes. (Hezekiah used a similar comparison: “Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd’s tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life” Isa. 38:12). Paul did not desire the naked state — dissolution in the grave, but rather the clothing on of immortality.

“that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” —

Probably an allusion to Isa. 25:8 — “He will swallow up death in victory” (cf. I Cor. 15:53, 54).

“Mortality” = “dying, mortal” (Yg).

5:5 *“Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame [‘very’, Nestle] thing is God,” —*

“He who has prepared us for this very thing is God,” R.S.V. The preparation was through the “light affliction” which “worketh [Gk: ‘katergazomai’, the same word as translated “wrought”] for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” (4:17).

“Wrought”, Gk: “katergazomai”, “to work down, thoroughly” (Yg).

“who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.” —

“Who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee”, R.S.V. The Holy Spirit — the subject of promise (John 14:26; Joel 2:28-32) had been given as a pledge or guarantee of a later fuller manifestation at the Second Advent. The token fulfilment with the coming of the Comforter and Spirit-gifts (John 14:16; I Cor. 12:28 cf. 2 Cor. 12:12) was a “tasting” of the powers of the age to come. (Heb. 6:4, 5; cf. 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13-15). It was also a pledge of God’s promise to “swallow up” mortality with life.

5:6 *“Therefore we are always confident [‘of good courage’, R.S.V.]” —*

“Confident” = “good cheer”, Nestle.

“knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, [Gk: ‘soma’]” —

This verse should be compared with Phil. 1:19-25. Paul is not using “body” merely for identification but rather the body of humiliation (“vile” A.V. Phil. 3:21), with all its disabilities and infirmities (2 Cor. 4:10, 11 cf. 10:10) associated with mortality. To be at home in such a condition was to be “away from home” (Nestle), from the Lord.

“At home”, Gk: “endemeo”, “to be among one’s people” (Yg); “to be in one’s country” (Stg).

“we are absent [‘away from’, R.S.V.] the Lord:” —

only in the glorious conditions of immortality will PERSONAL fellowship be experienced with the Lord.

“Absent” = away from one’s people, (Yg).

5:7 *“(For we walk by faith, not by sight [‘appearances’, Nestle; ‘perception’ Con. Ver.]” —*

This verse is parenthetical, explaining the sense in which we NOW are away from the Lord. “Sight” = “appearances”, (Yg). Cf. 4:18 — “For we look not at the things which are seen, but at things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

5:8 *“We are confident [‘good courage’ R.S.V.], I say, and willing [‘are delighting’ Con. Ver.; ‘of good cheer’, Nestle], rather to be absent from the body.*

Paul’s manifest desire was to be with the Lord. The liberation and glory of the immortal nature was in marked contrast with his life of mortality in which he was “always being given up to death” — “death is at work in us” (2 Cor. 4:11, 12, R.S.V.).

“Willing” = “to think well, be pleased” (Yg).

“and to be present [‘at home’ R.S.V.] with the Lord” —

This passage is invariably misquoted by religionists who hold the instantaneous translation of the “soul” to heavenly realms at death. But the passage does not read “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord”, but rather . . . “AND [Gk: ‘kai’] to be present with the Lord.” Since Paul’s early preaching work in Macedonia and Achaia many had “fallen asleep”, (1 Cor. 15:6; 1 Thess. 4:13). The possibility that such could happen to Paul before Christ returned was for him a real possibility, therefore to be “absent from the body” was not to be instantaneously “present with the Lord”, — the sleep of death would interrupt this transition.¹ As Paul himself put it: “Knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus, will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence” (4:14, R.S.V.).

5:9-11 THE JUDGMENT SEAT — AN INCENTIVE TO FAITHFUL OBEDIENCE NOW

5:9 *“Wherefore we labour,” —*

“Labour”, Gk: “*philotimeomai*,”² “to esteem as an honour”, (Yg); “we are ambitious”, R.V. mg.; Nestle; Con. Ver.; “eager”, Moffatt.

“that, whether present [‘at home’, R.S.V.] or absent [‘away’, R.S.V.]”, —
I.e., whether the Lord returned bringing his house from heaven to be clothed upon or Paul remained in his present condition of mortality until death claimed him, he would strive to please the Lord in either state.

“we may be accepted of him.” —

“we make it our aim to please him”, R.S.V. “Accepted” = “well pleasing” (Yg); Con. Ver.; Nestle.

¹For a more comprehensive treatment of these verses as wrested scriptures in support of the erroneous doctrines of the “immortal soul”, or “heaven the home for the righteous” see R.A., **Wrested Scriptures: A Christadelphian Handbook of Suggested Explanations to Difficult Passages**, (Pasadena, California: The Christadelphians, 1970), p. 121 cf. p.126.

²“*Philotimeomai*” which in classical Greek means “to be ambitious”, in late Greek loses its definiteness and signifies “to strive earnestly”. Ed. A. Plummer **The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges**. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1950) p.50.

5:10 *“For we must all appear [‘to be manifested’, Nestle] before [‘in front of’, Con. Ver.] the judgment seat [‘tribunal’ Nestle] of Christ;” —*

The “all” does not include infants, idiots, pagans, or those ignorant of the Gospel since these could not give an answer of the “deeds done in the body” (cf. also Isa. 26:13-14; I Thess. 4:13; Eph. 2:12). The epistle was addressed to believers which provides the qualification on the word “all”.³

“Appear” means “to manifest” (Yg). The A.V. translation, “appear” disguises the fact that the judgment will MANIFEST the secrets of men (not merely require one to appear). Paul had earlier instructed the Corinthians that Christ “would both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts” (I Cor. 4:5). Fear of failure and punishment provide negative reinforcement (so decried by educators) in Divine instruction (cf. vs. 11). The disciple must recognise this as an incentive not to be ignored — the judgment seat will provide God’s last act of mercy in the humbling experience of being manifest in front of Christ’s tribunal. (Cf. Rom. 14:10).

“that every one” —

The “all” of vs. 10 becomes “everyone” — all the Corinthians will have their building tested by the fire of judgment (cf. I Cor. 3:12-17; 4:4-5).

“may receive” —

“to bring” (Yg); “requited”, Nestle. This word is used of receiving wages (2 Pet. 2:13), and reaping a reward (Gal. 6:7).

“the things done in [Gk: ‘dia’, ‘through’] his body, [Gk: ‘somas’] according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” —

It is not certain from the Greek text whether “good or bad” refers to the life of probation or to the kind of reward received at the judgment seat. The latter interpretation seems more natural on the basis of the significance of “receive”. The “body” = “the body of mortality”. Recently a new view had been put forth as follows:

“Later translations such as the R.S.V. all translate the things ‘done in THE body’. A minor amendment we might think, but the context implies that THE body is the body of Christ.”

Against this interpretation consider the following:

1. *There is no evidence for this view in the context.* “Tou somatos” does occur in the Greek text, but this expression occurs in contexts where there is no question that Paul is referring to the literal body (e.g. 2 Cor. 4:10).

³This is not to imply however, that the judgment seat will be restricted only to those baptised. It is enlightenment, not baptism which makes a man accountable to resurrection and judgment (see Dt. 18:19; Jn. 12:48; Rom. 2:12).

⁴Article, “That there should be no schism in the body”, *The Believer*, (May-June, 1971) p.4.

2. Notice how phrase after phrase in the context of ch. 4 relates to the body of mortality and not to the Christ-body;
 - The treasure is in “earthenware vessels” (vs.7).
 - Paul bore “in the body” (“to somati”, e.g. rod marks from Philippi) “the dying of the Lord Jesus . . . that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in **our mortal flesh**” (vs. 10, 11).
 - “Though our outward man perish”, (vs.16).

Furthermore in chapter 5:

- “Our earthly tabernacle were dissolved”, (vs.1).
- “In this tabernacle we do groan being burdened . . . that **mortality** might be swallowed up of life” (vs.4).

These verses **are** the context and establish that “in the body” relates to the life of probation in the mortal body of which the relationship of one to his brethren in the Christ-body is only a part of that probation.

The simile comparing the human body to the ecclesia of Christ is employed in 1 Cor. 12:13, but such is not the context in 2 Cor. 5:10. The exhortation that one’s attitude to Christ is reflected in the relationship of one to another and that this will constitute an important part of judgment is well-founded in other parts of Scripture, but it is a novel and unconvincing exposition which uses the text of 2 Cor. 5:10 for this exhortation.

5:12-13 SINCERITY OF PURPOSE RE-AFFIRMED (cf.1:12).

5:11 *“Knowing therefore the terror [‘fear’, R.S.V., Nestle; Con. Ver.] of the Lord”*—

Paul regarded the laying bare of one’s character before the face of Christ in judgment as a fearful contemplation. He knew that only condemnation would result for his lying detractors whose misrepresentation and character defamation were having such an influence in the ecclesia.

“we persuade men”—

“Persuade” does occur in connection with the preaching of the basic elements of the gospel (Acts 26:28; Gal. 1:10) but in this context relates to the persuasion of Corinthian believers.

“but we are made manifest unto God;”—

This is an intended contrast. Paul **persuaded** men of the sincerity of his motives, but these were **already manifest** before God!

“and I trust [Gk: ‘elpizo’, ‘hope’, R.S.V.; Nestle] also are [‘have been’, Nestle, (perfect tense)] made manifest in your consciences”—

As far as the Corinthians were concerned, however, such manifestation could only be the subject of hope. Paul has returned to his point of 4:2. The things he had been doing “through” his body were manifest. He was “always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be

manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, [cf. 2 Cor. 11; 23-28] so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor. 4:10, 11., R.S.V.).

5:12 *"For we commend [Gk: 'sunistemi', 'to set together' (Yg)] not ourselves again unto you"*—

"Again" is emphatic in the Greek text⁵. Paul refuses to resort to self-commendation before the ecclesia (see note on 3:1 cf. 10; 17), but rather provides evidence for their defence of his integrity before the vicious attack of the wolflike Judaisers.

"but give you occasion to glory on our behalf"—

"Glory", Gk: "kauchematos", "boast" (Yg); Nestle; "but giving you cause to be proud of us" R.S.V.; "giving an incentive to you" Con. Ver.

"which glory ['boasting', Nestle; 'pride' R.S.V.] in appearance ['face, countenance' (Yg)]"—

"who pride themselves on a man's position and not on his heart", R.S.V. The Judaizer stressed letters of commendation (3:1); eloquence (10:10); Jewish pedigree (11:22), but as Paul later admonished "he that glorieth ['boast', R.S.V.] let him glory ['boast', R.S.V.] in the Lord". For not he that commendeth himself is approved but whom the Lord commendeth" (2 Cor. 10:17, 18). By measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves with one another they were "without understanding" (2 Cor. 10:12, R.S.V.).

"and not in heart"—

Samuel received this instruction (1 Sam. 16:7) when he was told that while man looks on the outward appearance, God looks ['eis kardian' (LXX)], into the heart.

5:13 *"For whether we be beside ourselves"*—

"Beside ourselves" = "to place out" (Yg); "we are mad" Nestle; "we went mad (aorist)"⁶—a single action in the past. At a later time Festus told Paul that he was mad (Acts 26:24). A similar allegation was made against Christ (Mark 3:21).

"it is to ['for' R.S.V.] God"—

Perhaps Paul was alleged to be mad by detractors because of his use of the gift of tongues (cf. 1 Cor. 14:18, 23) or the visions and revelations which he claimed to have received (12:1-6), but more probably because of his **doctrine**. Paul insists that his conduct was God-ward.

"or whether we be sober"—

"Sober" means "to be sound minded" (Yg); "we are in our senses" Nestle; "whether we are sane" Con. Ver.; "if we are in our right mind" R.S.V.

⁵Cambridge, p.52

⁶Cambridge, p.53.

“it is for your cause”—

Paul’s conduct in relation to the Corinthians regarding his travel plans, the “offender”, the Jerusalem Fund, etc. had been exemplary. No self-interested decisions had been made in moments of soberness!

5:14-17 LOVE OF CHRIST, NOT LOVE OF SELF— THE CONTROLLING INFLUENCE.

5:14 *“For the love of Christ constraineth us”—*

“Constraineth” = “to hold together”, (Yg); “controls”, R.S.V. See its use in Phil. 1:23 where “sunechomai” is translated “strait”. The love to which Paul refers is the love of Christ for those he came to save (not Paul’s love for Christ). This love surpasses knowledge (Eph. 3:17-19). Self-commendation and self-seeking were incompatible with such an appreciation.

“because we thus judge [Gk: ‘krino’, (aorist)], that if one died for all,—”

“For all”, Gk: “huper”, “in behalf of” (Yg); Nestle.⁷ Jesus did not die **instead** of the believer, but rather on behalf of him, as his representative,⁸ (the sinless bearer of condemned, sin-prone human nature). This is proven by the following:

1. If Christ, the **innocent**, paid the penalty deserved by the **guilty**, then it would present God as acting immorally (apart from His revealed character) in that He punished the innocent instead of the guilty.
2. There can be no forgiveness with God. If Christ paid the debt owed—the penalty incurred by Adam’s transgression, then it cannot be said that God has forgiven sins. One does not forgive a creditor when he pays in full the debt owed. (Cf. Acts 2:28; Titus 2:11).
3. It would make the atonement rest wholly on Christ’s sacrificial death **apart from** his resurrection. If the debt was paid by the death of Christ, then Christ ought not to have been raised, and in no sense could justification be effected by his resurrection. But Paul says “he was **raised** for our justification” (Rom. 4:25).

“then were all dead.”—

“therefore all have died”, R.S.V. In what sense were all dead? “In trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1-3), as “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12).

⁷If the doctrine of substitution were intended, the Gk. preposition would have been “anti” = “instead of”, and not “huper”. “But here ‘huper’ is (as usual) used, and the rendering ‘instead of’, even if linguistically possible (which it is not) is excluded by the fact that in the phrase ‘auton apothanonti kai egerthenti’, ‘huper auton’ is governed by **both** participles. Christ rose again ‘on our behalf’; he is never said to have risen ‘instead of us’,” W. Nicoll ed., **The Expositor’s Greek Testament**, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910); p.70.

⁸This is indicated further by the apostle’s words: “Therefore we are buried **with him** by baptism into death” (Rom. 6:4). To be buried “with him” precludes the idea that he died instead of the believer.

5:15 *“And that he died for [‘on behalf of’, Nestle] all,”—*

His sacrifice was for all, apart from whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free, barbarian or Scythian.

“that they which live should not henceforth live [‘still be living’, Con. Ver.] unto themselves,”—

In baptism the believer performs ritually what Christ performed throughout his life, publicly demonstrated in his baptism, and completed in his death—the dethroning of King Sin’s power in sin-prone human nature. (Cf. Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin . . . yield yourselves unto God as those who are alive from the dead” (Rom. 6:8, 10, 13). Paul could personally testify: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20 R.S.V.) Timothy was a living testimony of this fact to the Corinthians. As Paul put it: “I have no one like him, who will be genuinely anxious for your welfare. They all look after their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ” (Phil 2:20,21). As such, Timothy was Paul’s “beloved and faithful child”, qualified to remind the Corinthians “of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every ecclesia” (1 Cor. 4:17 R.S.V.).

“but unto him which died for them”—

Although the stress here is on Christ’s sacrificial work for others, it must not be forgotten that Christ was personally involved in this redemption; “. . . by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption [‘for us’, not included in the Gk. text]. (Heb. 9:12). The verb, “obtained”, “securing”, R.S.V., is in the middle voice indicating something done to oneself; i.e., **he obtained eternal redemption for himself in obtaining it for others.** This fact required underlining.

“and rose again”—

The implied comparison here is stated explicitly by Paul in his letter to the Colossians: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Col. 3:1-3).

5:16 *“Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh:”—*

Paul the Apostle was no longer Saul the Pharisee. The oneness in Christ was a renunciation of deference paid to circumcision, “appearances” or fleshly descent. Only one thing mattered—a new creation (Gal. 6:15), irrespective of one’s station in life or background circumstances.

“yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh”—

This was to regard him, as did the Pharisees, as merely the Carpenter’s son (Jn. 8:14, 15; Matt. 15:55).

“Yet now henceforth know we him no more”—

Christ was now regarded by Paul as the “image of God” whose glorious gospel light had shone into his heart (formerly veiled). (Cf. 2 Cor. 4:4, 6).

5:17 *“Therefore if any man be in Christ”—*

To be in Christ involved more than putting him “on” in baptism (Gal 3:27). It meant more than the profession to belong to him (1 Cor. 1:12). The ultimate test rested in fruit produced by the germination and growth of the Spirit-word.

“he is a new creature [‘creation’, R.S.V.; Con. Ver.; Nestle].”—

This is the righteousness which comes by faith. Despite Paul’s blameless law-keeping as a Pharisee, he was not a new creation. This was only accomplished when the principles of the atonement worked mightily in him. In retrospect he could count all his “gain” in Judaism as “loss” for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus (cf. Phil. 3:8-10).

“old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”—

Paul is not referring to a “born again experience” as understood by the Evangelical apostasy, the direct operation of God’s Holy Spirit power, but rather the regeneration accomplished by the Spirit-word. Believers are “born again” by this agency (cf. 1 Pet. 1:23, 25; 2 Pet. 2:1, 2). To be a new creation means a refusal to let the world squeeze one into its mould. It requires a transformation of outlook carefully nurtured by the daily renewing of the inner man, in knowledge after the image of Him who created “him” (4:16; Col. 3:10). To do such, is to realise the Divine design “for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).

AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST—THE MESSAGE OF RECONCILIATION, NOT SELF-ASSUMED, BUT DIVINELY DELEGATED.

5:18 *“And all things are of God”—*

It was not Paul or any of the apostles who effected such, but it was rather God Himself. Paul was a beneficiary like the Corinthians. As Paul had earlier affirmed: “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God,” (2 Cor. 3:5).

“who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ”—

“Reconciled” = “to change thoroughly” (Yg). The aorist is employed indicating that reconciliation was effected at a definite point of time in the past, i.e. when he “bore our sins in his own body on the tree” (1 Pet. 2:24; cf. Col. 1:22). God was the prime-mover in reconciliation through Christ. It is man who is reconciled to God, not God to man: “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

“and hath given [‘entrusted’, R.S.V.] to us the ministry [‘message’, R.S.V.] of reconciliation”—

Paul did not arrogate this office as did others at Corinth (2 Cor. 11:13-15, 22). He was a chosen vessel for the very purpose of taking the gospel to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15, 16. c.f. Acts 9:15).

5:19 *“To wit, that God was in Christ,”*—

“To wit” = “that is” R.S.V.; “in conformity with the fact that”, **Century Bible**. How was God in Christ?

1. **By the nature of his birth**—The Son received from his Father the Divine strength to overcome his sin-prone human nature (received from his mother) which had claimed all before him as sinners. The virgin birth gave Christ “a spirit of quick understanding” for his redemptive work (Isa. 11:2).

2. **By communion with His Father**—

(a) through prayer (e.g. Mk. 1:35).

(b) through the Scriptures (e.g. Matt. 4:4, 7, 10).

(c) through angelic ministrations (Matt. 4:11; 26:53).

This is the great revealing of God-manifestation in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). As such, the Son (in character) was the very stamp and impress of His Father.

“reconciling the world unto himself”—

See comment on vs.18.

“not imputing their trespasses”—

“Imputing” = “to count, reckon” (Yg). “Trespasses” = “a trespass, falling aside”, (Yg); “offences”, Con. Ver. Through Christ Jesus, God could forgive sins, since his representative sacrifice enabled God’s sovereignty and righteousness to be upheld. See note on vs. 21.

“and hath committed unto [Gk. ‘en’, ‘in’ Nestle] us the word [‘message’ R.S.V.] of reconciliation”—

“Committed” = “to place, put, set” (Yg); “entrusted”, R.S.V.; “and placing in us”, Nestle. This is a re-statement of Paul’s insistence that his apostleship and authority at Corinth were not arrogated. He had rather been entrusted with the onerous responsibility of carrying forth the word of reconciliation.

5:20 *“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ”*—

“Ambassadors” = “elders, seniors” (Yg). As fragile earthenware vessels—wasting away, the apostles were the custodians of great treasure, to show that the transcendent power belonged to God.

“as though God did beseech [Gk: ‘parakeleo’, ‘to call to one’s side’] you by us”—

“God making his appeal through us” R.S.V. The apostles were Christ’s representatives.

“we pray [‘to want, pray, beseech’ (Yg)] you in Christ’s stead [‘on behalf of’, Nestle]”—

In his capacity as Messiah’s ambassador he **begs** the Corinthians, be ye reconciled to God.

“be ye reconciled to God”—

Such a reconciliation was a prerequisite if Christ was to be glorified in the Corinthian believers in the day when the fire would try every man’s work (cf. 2 Thess. 1:10). The grace of God was not to be received in vain (6:1). Despite the constitutional reconciliation effected in Christ Jesus and appropriated by Corinthians at baptism, the principles of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption must be evidenced in “a new creation” **practically**. It was in this area that the Corinthians were beset with sin (2 Cor. 12:20, 21; 13:2, 5, 7).

5:21 *“He hath made him to be sin”—*

“Sin”, Gk: “harmartia”, “sin, error, sin-offering” (Yg); “offence, sin” (Stg). Two interpretations have been offered for the expression “made him to be sin”. These are as follows:

- (a) “sin” = sin-offering
- (b) “sin” = (metonymically)⁹ sin-prone, human nature.

The evidence for (a) “sin” = “sin-offering” has been set out recently as follows:

1. “When was Jesus MADE SIN for us, who knew no sin? Certainly not in his birth, but in his sacrificial offering. Dr. Adam Clarke, a notable commentator, clearly shows that ‘harmartia’ is consistently translated in the O.T. LXX (Septuagint) more than 50 times as ‘sin-offering’ ”.¹⁰
2. “Our contention is that the Hebrew word which stands for both sin and sin offering was transferred from the Old Testament and reflected in the New in such passages as 2 Cor. 5:21. For example, Parkhurst’s Greek Lexicon states this manner of expression exactly corresponds to the Hebrew where both the sin and sin offering is denoted by the same word.”¹¹
“The Emphatic Diaglott . . . renders 2 Cor. 5:21 ‘For him who knew no sin, he made a sin-offering on our behalf’ ”.¹²

⁹Metonymy—when the effect is placed for the cause or the cause for the effect. “Substitution of the name of an attribute for that of the thing meant (e.g. ‘crown’ for ‘king’)”, Oxford Dict. The effect—sin, which is placed for the cause of transgression—sin-prone human nature. There are many examples of metonymy in Scripture. E.g.: “drink this cup” (1 Cor. 11:27) = “drink the contents of the cup”.

¹⁰H.A. Twine, Mimeo. circular letter “Excommunicated! Cut off from the communion of the Church”, Sept. 2, 1969.

¹¹C. Pryde, “The Watchman” (Series 1, No. 8, May 1971), p.3.

¹²C. Pryde, “The Watchman” (Series 2, No. 3, May 1971), p.3.

Examination of this evidence:

1. With the exception of the **Emphatic Diaglott**, a marginal note in the New English Bible (1970); R.V. mg; and a note in Young's **Concise Critical Comments** not one of the following translations consulted renders "harmartia" by "sin-offering".¹³
N.E.B. (1970); R.S.V.; R.S.V. Catholic Ed. (1966); R.V.; Interlinear Gk.-Eng. N.T. (Nestle and Marshall); New World Trans. (1961); Moffatt (1935); Knox (1955); Concordant Version; The New Testament in Modern English (J. B. Phillips, 1958); The Bible in Basic English (1947); Berkeley Ver. in Modern English (1959); Douay Bible (1847); The Jerusalem Bible (1966); as well as **The New Testament from 26 Translations** (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1967). Of the twenty-six translational variations presented, not one gives "sin-offering". (Some of the 26 translations are already listed above). This comprehensive list constitutes substantial evidence against the **Emphatic Diaglott** rendering.
2. It is noteworthy that the **Emphatic Diaglott** does not render "harmartia" "sin-offering" in the interlinear text, but only in the translation (in the right-hand column). Benjamin Wilson was probably misled in his interpretive translation by the commentator Macknight whom he quotes in the footnote to this passage. (Macknight probably follows Augustine,¹⁴ apparently the first expositor to read "sin-offering" for "harmartia" in this passage).
3. Similarly the evidence from Adam Clark's Commentary is only superficially impressive. Note the following:
 - (a) Clark identifies "harmartia" with the Hebrew word "chattath" on the basis of the use of "harmartia" in the LXX (Septuagint Translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, 3rd Century B.C.), but not on the basis of its use in the inspired New Testament. "Harmartia" occurs over 150 times in the Greek text, but it is never translated "sin-offering" anywhere in the A.V.
 - (b) Although "harmartia" is used for the Heb. "chattath" in the LXX, both "chattath" and "harmartia" are used in many contexts where "sin-offering" would be an impossible rendering (see e.g. Gen. 18:20; 31:36). "Harmartia" cannot be confined to mean only "sin-offering" even in the LXX. For this reason it is misleading to say that "harmartia" is "consistently translated . . . as 'sin-offering'".

¹³In his **Literal Translation**, however, Young does not render "harmartia", "sin-offering" but consistently translates it "sin" in both places in 2 Cor. 5:21. In his **Concise Critical Comments** (London: Picking and Inglis), p.120, Young brackets "offering" suggesting that it is an interpretive rendering.

¹⁴See International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark 1915) p. 187.

¹⁵Clarke's Bible (London: Thomas Tegg & Son 1836) p. 1317.

- (c) Clarke's interpretation must remain suspect that theological presuppositions have coloured his preference for "sin-offering" rather than "sin". He writes in the same context: "[other translators] have confounded sin with punishment due to sin . . . Christ suffered in our stead . . . bore our sins (the punishment due to them)"¹⁵. He first assumes the substitutionary explanation for the sacrifice of Christ and then apparently uses this as grounds for rendering "harmartia" "sin-offering".
4. Although Jesus was a sin-offering (Isa. 53:10), "harmartia", **cannot** be translated "sin-offering" in 2 Cor. 5:21 for the following two reasons:
- (a) Substitute "sin-offering" for "harmartia" and the result is absurd: "he made him to be a sin-offering [harmartia] who knew no sin-offering [harmartia]". Consistency requires that one Greek word carry the **same** meaning in the same clause.¹⁶
- (b) The Greek text has an antithetical balance in its structure which is destroyed by the substitution of "sin-offering".

He made him to be sin	that we might be made the righteousness of God in him
who knew no sin	[who knew no righteousness] (to supply the ellipsis)

"SIN" = SIN-PRONE HUMAN NATURE

In support of interpretation (b) that sin = metonymically, sin-prone human nature, consider the following:

1. It does not require equivocation—making "harmartia" mean two different things in the same clause.
2. It preserves the antithetical structure of the Greek text.
3. To translate "harmartia" by "sin" has the following in its support:
 - (a) Almost all translations support this rendering.
 - (b) It is the usual use of the word in the Greek N.T.
4. It has the support of other passages e.g.
 Heb. 9:28 ". . . unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation". There is only one sense in which he can appear the second time "without sin" and that is without sin-

¹⁶This same point is made in the following sources: "[harmartia] cannot be translated 'sin-offering' (as at Lev. 4:8, 21, 24, 34; 5:9-12), for it cannot have two different meanings in the same clause". J. Bernard, **The Expositor's Greek Testament**, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903), p. 73. See also H. Goudge, **The 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians** (London: Methuen and Co., 1927), p. 60; A. Plummer ed, **The 2nd Epistle . . . Cor.** **The Cambridge Bible Commentary for Schools and Colleges**. (Cambridge: Uni. Press, 1950, p.56; **International Critical Commentary**, (Edinburgh: T&T. Clark, 1915), p. 187.

prone human nature which metonymically is referred to as “sin”. To read “sin” here as “sin-offering” makes no sense.

5. In order to understand when and why God made him to be sin a brief review of what took place in Eden is required. Adam’s transgression resulted in the following:
 - (a) a defiled conscience (Gen. 3:7, 8 cf. 2:25),
 - (b) Adam became **subject** to death (Gen. 3:19; Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21, 22).
 - (c) A bias toward evil became resident within his constitution so that the nature of his descendants is characterised by “deceitful lusts” (Eph. 4:22).

The transgression of Adam left God with the following alternatives (from the human point of view):

- (a) **Eradicate sin by destroying the sinners.** This would have resulted in the failure of God’s purpose (“For [His] pleasure they are and were created”, Rev. 4:11; “by thy will they existed and were created”, R.S.V.)
 - (b) **Ignore the sin.** To do so God would have to abdicate His sovereignty, since He had said, “in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17).
 - (c) **Effect atonement**—exercise forgiveness¹⁷ while upholding His righteousness.
6. **When did God make him to be “sin”?** At his birth. For those who reject the metonymical use of sin for sin-prone human nature (as do H. Twine and C. Pryde) then of course, it must also be denied that God made Jesus “sin” at his birth when he partook of sin-prone human nature. Consider the following:

Gal. 4:4 “God sent forth his Son, **made** of a woman”.

Heb. 2:1: “He himself likewise partook of the same nature [flesh and blood]”, R.S.V.

1 Jn.4:2,3 “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.”

7. **Why did God make him to be “sin” for us?**

- (a) **To vindicate His righteousness and sovereignty God provided atonement.** He was in Christ reconciling the world unto **Himself**. Christ’s representative death publicly placarded (in his crucifixion) that the flesh in which resided a proneness to sin is rightly related to death by Divine decree (Rom. 3:23-26).

¹⁷In this provision, Adam and Eve would learn to appreciate God’s attributes of justice and mercy.

- (b) **To effect atonement.** Christ's death was sacrificial. God has condescended to grant forgiveness of sins on the basis of the believer's acknowledgement of the principles which operated in Christ's life and death. "He himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness" (1 Pet. 2:24, R.S.V.).
- (c) **As an example to follow.** The Son of God through His birth by Mary shared the identical sin-prone nature of those He came to save. In so doing He experienced the full effects of this nature common to all, and therefore can be set forth as an example to follow (1 Pet. 2:21-24). His perfect faithfulness demonstrated that the flesh profits nothing, and that the strength to overcome originates from God, being extraneous to man himself in his natural constitution (cf. Jn. 6:63; Jn. 5:19, 30; 1 Tim. 3:16).

"who knew no sin"—

Christ was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" **morally**, (not physically—i.e., regarding his sin-prone nature). As Peter puts it: "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Pet. 2:22).

"that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"—

"Righteousness" = "rightness, justice" (Yg). The believer is "made" the righteousness of God when this is imputed to him at baptism on the basis of **faith** apart from the works of the Law of Moses (Gal. 3:21; Rom. 3:21, 22). Such believers are then servants referred to as of righteousness.

The next section shows the significance of Isa. 49 as is quoted by Paul and applied to his ministry to the Gentiles.

6:1-10 PAUL'S DEFENCE OF HIS INTEGRITY AS MESSIAH'S AMBASSADOR

Paul and the Apostles—Fellow Workers with God.

6:1 *"We then as workers together with him"—*

Paul was a co-labourer in the Lord's work with his converts, but the point here is that Paul (as with the other apostles) is a co-worker with **God**! The context of 5:20 requires this: "God did beseech you by us". (See also 1 Cor. 3:9; Acts 15:4).

"that ye receive ['accept', R.S.V.] not the grace of God in vain"—

"Vain" = "to no purpose", Nestle; "for naught", Con. Ver. The grace of God could not profit the Judaiser who insisted on the works of the Law for righteousness instead of the righteousness of faith (cf. Phil. 3:9). But this is not the point here. Paul is rather referring to reconciliation of Jew and Gentile, the effects of which were being vitiated¹ by a refusal on the part of some in the ecclesia (principally Jewish elements, 2 Cor. 11) to recognise the Divine ministry given to Paul and the other apostles.

The use of the word "vain" is a verbal allusion to the LXX of Isa. 49:4: "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain". This passage which unquestionably applies to the Messiah (cf. Isa. 49:3, 6, cf. 42:7) is applied by Paul to the Christ-body at Corinth.

6:2 *"For he saith"—*

These are not only the words of Isaiah (Paul is quoting Isa. 49:8), but the words of **God**. Isaiah was the mouthpiece of God through the Holy Spirit power which directed his writing (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21).

Paul's use of Isa. 49 is most instructive. He cites it, or alludes to it in the following passages:

Isa. 49:1 "The LORD hath called me from the womb;"	Gal. 1:15 "God, who separated me from my mother's womb."
Isa. 49:3 "Thou art my servant,"	Gal. 1:10 "the servant of Christ."
Isa. 49:4 "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain:"	Phil. 2:16 "that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."

¹The licentious conduct of others was having the same effect, (see 2 Cor. 12:20, 21; 6:14-18).

<p>Isa. 49:4 “yet surely my judgment is with the LORD,”</p> <p>“and my work [mg. ‘reward’] with my God”</p>	<p>1 Cor. 4:4 “For I know nothing by myself; . . . but he that judgeth me is the Lord.” I am not aware of anything against myself,” R.S.V.</p> <p>2 Cor. 6:1 We then, as workers together with him,”</p>
<p>Isa. 49:5 “my God shall be my strength.”</p>	<p>2 Cor. 12:9 “my strength is made perfect in weakness.” cf. Phil. 4:13 “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”</p>
<p>Isa. 49:6 “to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel:”</p>	<p>Acts 9:15 “to bear my name before . . . the children of Israel:”</p>
<p>Isa. 49:6 “I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.”</p>	<p>Acts 13:47 “I have set thee [Paul] to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.” (This is applied to Christ, Acts 26:23). Gal. 1:16, R.S.V. “[God] was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles”</p>
<p>Isa. 49:7 “him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth,”</p>	<p>1 Cor. 4:9, 10 “for we are made a spectacle unto the world . . . we are despised.” (cf. also 2 Cor. 4:9, 10).</p>
<p>Isa. 49:7 “to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship,”</p>	<p>Acts 9:15 “to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings,”</p>
<p>Isa. 49:7, R.S.V. “the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”</p>	<p>Acts 9:15 “he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles,”</p>

Isa. 49:8

“In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee.”

2 Cor. 6:2

“I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

This list of N.T. allusions and quotations shows Isa. 49 to refer to the Servant's (Messiah's) adoption of Gentiles into the covenant. Since Paul applies these passages to his own ministry, his message of reconciliation is all the more impressive. In effect he is an extension, an appendage, of Messiah himself. It might be a valid inference if Paul draws his exhortation from a context which relates to the grace of God being extended to the Gentiles, that it was predominantly **Gentiles** who were in danger of vitiating the effects of reconciliation.

“I have heard [listened', R.S.V.] thee in a time accepted”—

Paul quotes from the LXX. The quotation is a powerful exhortation to the effect that his admonition: “we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20, R.S.V.) be implemented **immediately**—“**NOW** is the accepted time”.

“and in the day [‘a day’, Nestle] of salvation”—

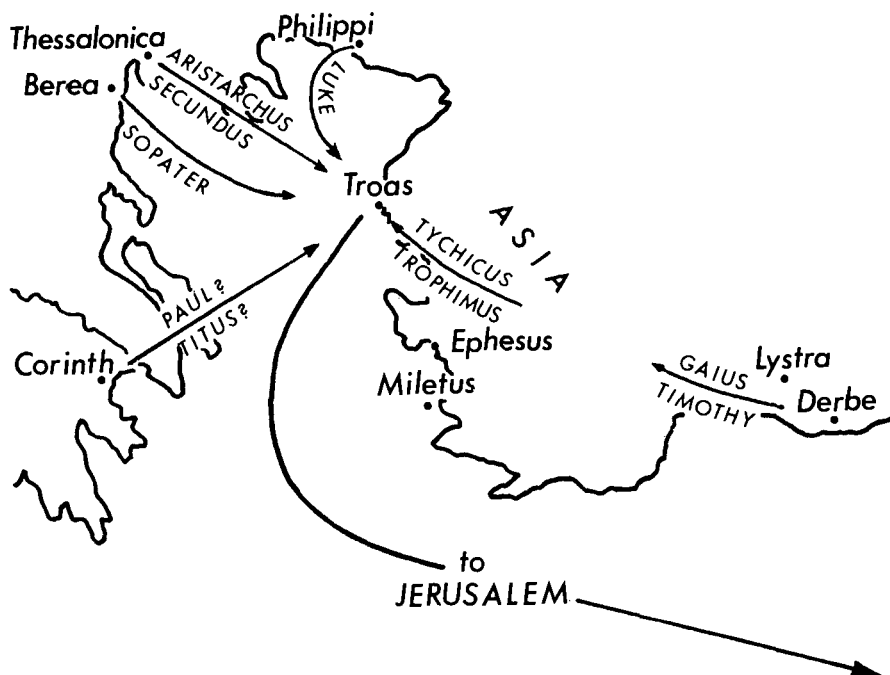
Paul is quoting from a prophetic dialogue between the Father and Son—the Holy One of Israel and the Servant.

“have I succoured [‘helped’, R.S.V.] thee”—

“Succoured” = “to come to the help of, aid, assist, help”, (Yg). The “hearing” and “helping” of the Servant (Messiah) relate as the prophecy shows to Gentile conversion (Isa. 49:6). The quotation ends here but Paul adds a further comment.

The JERUSALEM POOR FUND

2 COR. 8 & 9



'If only I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus...' (Acts 20:24)

INTRODUCTION

To say that the Apostle Paul was a busy man in the service of the Truth is to make an understatement. He wrote to the Corinthians: "And apart from other things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the ecclesias." (2 Cor. 11:28, R.S.V.). Despite his onerous labours, it is Paul who is requested by the Apostles to "remember the poor" (Gal. 2:10, R.S.V.). "Which very thing," he said, "I was eager to do." If the Truth had only been accepted by the Apostle as a kind of part-time job on a limited basis, then perhaps he might have profited from the extra work. But as it was, he suffered from toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure (2 Cor. 11:27). Added to this he was beaten and afflicted so mercilessly that he could write: "for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. Why, we felt that we had received the sentence of death . . ." (2 Cor. 1:8, 9, R.S.V.). Surely the Apostle must have known that to accept the task of collecting money for the poor in Judea would be a time-consuming enterprise, fraught with danger and difficulties. Why then did he accept the responsibilities?

The questions do not stop here. Paul was not a believer trying to find some aspect of the Truth in which to "specialise"—as if to suggest that "remember the poor" would give him direction in his service. Paul was commissioned as a chosen vessel to carry the name of Jesus before the Gentiles, kings and children of Israel (Acts 9:15). Why did he accept an additional task of "remembering the poor" which appears to have so little in common with his great commission? Surely there were other Spirit-gifted brethren who could have undertaken the administration of the Fund?

There seemed to be a senseless urgency in the Apostle's insistence to carry the proceeds of the Fund to Jerusalem. He told the elders of Ephesus, "And now behold, I am going to Jerusalem, bound in the Spirit, not knowing what shall befall me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus to testify to the gospel of the grace of God." (Acts 20:22-24, R.S.V.). Later at Caesarea, on his way to Jerusalem, he seemed to dismiss the prophetic warning of Agabus that the Jews at Jerusalem would bind him and turn him over to the Gentiles (Acts 21:10, 11). Despite the pleas of the brethren and people who begged him not to go to Jerusalem, Paul said: "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus"—and he would not be persuaded (Acts 21:12-14).

The evidence of the Epistles and Acts of the Apostles indicates that the Jerusalem Poor Fund was of far greater significance than the giving of money "to remember the poor". It is the purpose of these notes to find out why there was a greater significance.

Should the Almighty see fit to spare our lives for future service, may we be kindled in spirit to emulate the selflessness of the Apostle in his willingness to spend and be spent in the Lord's work. May we catch the glow of the gracious Philippians who, while experiencing a severe test of affliction and dire poverty, begged earnestly for the favour of taking part in the relief of the saints. They gave beyond their means (2 Cor. 8:1-5). When we are convinced that the Truth is not a part-time job on a limited basis but a full-time commitment, then we will catch a glimpse of the joy of those who first give themselves to their Lord.

THE JERUSALEM POOR FUND

2 Cor. 8 and 9

The Jerusalem Poor Fund was initiated at the request of the Apostles in Jerusalem "to remember the poor" (Gal. 2:10). It had a practical purpose in meeting the needs of poor Jews in Jerusalem, but its effects **were** far-reaching—much beyond a matter of money. It was the special work of the Apostle Paul to undertake the administration of the Fund. Why should an Apostle already over-taxed in his great preaching work to the Gentiles be encumbered by an additional responsibility, which, from the human point of view, was unrelated to his calling, and which could have been done by many other brethren? The fact is, as this exposition attempts to show, that the two were inseparable. It was Paul's great undertaking to knit Jewish and Gentile hearts in the bonds of the Covenant through the Jerusalem Poor Fund.

The attention given to this study will be a rewarding undertaking. Many otherwise isolated details are brought together in Acts of the Apostles, Romans, and Corinthians, once the importance of this Fund is understood. Despite the concern of well-meaning brethren who broke Paul's heart in their appeals that he not go to Jerusalem, despite the warnings (through the Spirit-gifted Agabus) of bonds and imprisonments which would await him, Paul resolutely refused to be deterred from going to Jerusalem. Was it merely to convey the money to the poor there? No, the work directly concerned Paul's apostolic calling and his priestly ministrations of offering the Gentiles upon the Christ-altar to his Heavenly Father.

Paul's appeal to the Corinthians in these two chapters must be one of the most moving and tactful appeals in all of Scripture. It is an appeal worthy of careful study and emulation.

THE BACKGROUND TO THE JERUSALEM POOR FUND

1. **Famine conditions in Judea** (Acts 11:27-30).

Agabus foretold by the Spirit (he had the gift of prophecy, cf. 1 Cor. 12:10) that the "oikoumene"—Roman world¹—would experience a great famine.² (Acts 11:27-30). As a result of this prophecy, the disciples were

¹"Oikoumene", the Greek word which the AV translates "world" in Acts 11:28 means "habitable earth or land" (Yg) and often refers only to the Roman world.

²Secular historians confirm the occurrence of this famine: "Then came Tiberius Alexander as successor to Fadus . . . under these procurators that great famine happened in Judea, in which Queen Helena bought corn in Egypt . . . and distributed it to those in want . . . Her coming was of very great advantage to the people of Jerusalem for whereas a famine did oppress them at that time and many people died for want of what was necessary to procure food withal, Queen Helena sent some of the servants to Alexandria with money to buy a great quantity of corn". Flavius Josephus, "Antiquities of the Jews", Book XX, chapt. II, section 5 in **Josephus: Complete Works**, (translated by H. Whiston), (London: Pickering and Inglis Ltd., 1964), p. 416. A further verification is contained in the writings of Suetonius (a Roman historian of the first century) who wrote that in the reign of Claudius there was a scarcity of provisions, occasioned by bad crops for several successive years. See J. A. Thompson, **Luke the Historian**, (Melbourne: The Australian Institute of Archaeology, 1954), p. 7.

moved to send relief to Judea, “everyone according to his ability”. The collection was given to the elders in Jerusalem by Barnabas and Saul. (This was a much earlier collection than the appeal of 2 Cor. 8 and 9, about A.D. 41).

2. Conditions of the Jewish converts in Judea

The first collection for poor Jews in Jerusalem was delivered by Paul and Barnabas about 41 A.D. (Acts 24:17). The appeal of 2 Cor. 8 and 9 was much later, about A.D. 50. Why the continued need for the collection? A number of reasons may be inferred:

(a) The Jerusalem area was poor for agriculture so that the effects of the famine in A.D. 41 would continue to be felt for some time later.

(b) Many of the early converts in the Jerusalem Ecclesia who did have means had already sold their lands to assist the communal fund (Acts 4:34). Few of the brethren would have resources to assist the needy after A.D. 41.

(c) Perhaps the most impressive reason is the fact that converts to the Truth were thrust out of the synagogue (e.g. Jn. 9:22; 16:2) which cut them off from the welfare of the synagogue. The communal fund would no doubt be used initially to assist such cases, but resources must soon have been depleted and outside help required. (This is the point of the exhortation of Eph. 4:28).

(d) Even within the Jewish community itself (shortly after the Truth was preached by Peter at Pentecost) wealthier Jews were persecuting poor converts (James 2:1-6; 5:1-10).

3. Paul’s commission to remember the poor (Gal. 2:10).

Peter, James and John gave Barnabas and Paul the right hand of fellowship after it became evident that their credentials as believers were bona fide. Paul commented on his commission: “Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward [‘eager’, R.S.V.] to do”. (Gal. 2:10).

4. The charge to “lay aside as prospered” (1 Cor. 16:1-3).

Paul instructed the Corinthians as he had done those in Galatia to lay aside money on a weekly basis and then have it forwarded to Jerusalem by accredited representatives of the respective ecclesias. The Corinthians had made a ready response initially (2 Cor. 9:2) but when Paul’s credentials were attacked, his authority eroded and accusations made that he had embezzled ecclesial funds, the Corinthian enthusiasm waned and the Fund lapsed into disfavour.

PAUL'S THREE VISITS TO JERUSALEM

In piecing together the records of Acts, Galatians, Romans and Corinthians, it is important to have familiarity with the relationship of Paul to the Jerusalem Ecclesia. These visits are as follows:

1. FIRST VISIT

After his conversion Paul immediately went into Arabia and then returned to Damascus (Gal. 1:15-17). He later returned to Jerusalem where he had only limited contact with the Apostles (Gal. 1:18-19; Acts 9:26-28). When the Jews attempted to slay him, the brethren brought him to Caesarea and sent him forth to Tarsus (Acts 9:30).

2. SECOND VISIT

Paul refers to his second visit when he wrote, "Then fourteen years after I went up again ['by revelation', Gal. 2:2] to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also" (Gal. 2:1). By this time Cornelius had been converted, thereby opening the door to the Gentiles, and so the right hand of fellowship was extended to Paul and Barnabas. They were sent by James, Cephas and John to the Gentiles, while James, Cephas and John went unto "the circumcision"—the Jews (Gal. 2:9). It was at this time that he was requested by these brethren not to neglect his ministration for the relief of the poor. "And Barnabas and Saul returned from ['to', R.S.V. mg.] Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry", (i.e., delivered the ecclesial contributions, Acts 12:25).

3. THIRD VISIT

Barnabas and Paul were chosen by Divine revelation (Acts 13:2-4) for their first missionary journey which resulted in the founding of ecclesias at Pisdian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, in the Province of Galatia (Acts 13:14). Paul then returned to Jerusalem for the Jerusalem Conference of Acts 15, to resolve problems which arose when "certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, 'Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved' " (Acts 15:1).

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUCCESS OF THE FUND

1. Alleviate Jewish Suspicions of the Genuineness of Corinthian Converts

The Jewish brethren in Jerusalem would have known that the city of Corinth was known for its immorality and licentiousness. To "Corinthianise" meant to engage in the wicked life of the heathen temple. Gentiles regarded such activity as religious and therapeutic, but to devout Jews it was inimical. The ecclesia at Corinth had problems which reflected the environment—idolatry, fornication, eating of things offered to idols. Corinth, of all the ecclesias in the Grecian world, was most suspect therefore, of Gentile liberties. It was a test case—if the Jewish brethren could accept the Corinthian Gentiles, then the likelihood of overcoming the prejudice elsewhere was almost a certainty. If a significant contribution to the Relief Fund were made, it would be a powerful argument in support of genuine Gentile standing in the Truth.

2. Bind Jew and Gentile together in the Bonds of the Truth

There can be no doubt that Paul saw in this Fund the opportunity to knit Jewish and Gentile hearts in the bonds of the Gospel. So important was this in Paul's work for his Lord that he was prepared to give his life for the success of the effort. It has been well expressed:

"If only he [Paul] could induce such men and women [Jews at Jerusalem] to accept the token of Gentile affection and solicitude which the proceeds of the collection constituted. His hope was that they would accept not only the offering but also those who made it."³

This work was regarded by Paul as his service to the saints (Rom. 15:25) and his priestly ministration. He expressed it this way: "That I should be the minister ['leitourgon'—the allusion to a sacrificing priest under the Law] of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles . . . that the offering up ['sacrificing', A.V. mg.] of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 15:16).

3. Establish Paul's authority at Corinth

Judaising teachers dogged the steps of the Apostle Paul, even to Corinth. They claimed to have the sanction of the mother ecclesia at Jerusalem (2 Cor. 3:1-2) and attacked Paul's claim to apostleship (2 Cor. 11:5, 12-15; 12:11-12; 13:3). If the Fund were enthusiastically supported by the Corinthian Ecclesia, it would re-establish Paul's authority both at Corinth, and, by implication, at Jerusalem, too. Where would this leave the Judaiser? On the outside where he belonged!

4. Implacable Jewish Adversaries at Jerusalem.

Paul knew by revelation that "bonds and afflictions" awaited him at Jerusalem (Acts 20:23; 21:10-11). A plot to kill him at Corinth was discovered just before he left the city (Acts 20:3). It must have added to the sense of foreboding for his close friends and given urgency to his appeal:

"I appeal to you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service may be acceptable to the saints," (Rom. 15:30-31, R.S.V.).

The journey to Jerusalem was a labour of love by the Apostle. It was, in fact, a practical demonstration of "enduring all things", "bearing all things", and "hoping all things" of which he wrote to the Corinthians in his first Epistle (1 Cor. 13:7).

5. The Delicate Nature of the Appeal to the Corinthians

It was insinuated at Corinth that Paul had been embezzling ecclesial funds (2 Cor. 12:16, 17, 18, R.S.V.). Even his apostleship had come under challenge (2 Cor. 11:12, R.S.V.). What could be more difficult than to challenge the newly achieved reconciliation between Paul and the ecclesia (2 Cor. 7) by a reminder of Corinthian responsibilities regarding financial contributions? Tactfully, Paul omits any reference to actual money and stresses his interest in **them**, rather than what is **theirs**. (See 2 Cor. 12:14,

³W. F. Barling, *The Letters to Corinth*, (Birmingham: The Christadelphian, 1960), p. 197.

15). He uses the following words in regard to the Fund:

“logia” — collection (1 Cor. 16:1);

“koinonia” — contribution (Rom. 15:26);

“charis” — grace, liberality (1 Cor. 16:3; 2 Cor. 8:4).

It was therefore, very important for Paul’s own position at Corinth, and the position of the Ecclesia in relation to the Jewish Ecclesias elsewhere, that the Corinthian ecclesia respond favourably.

8:1-5 MACEDONIAN GIVING—AN EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW

8:1 *“Moreover, brethren we do you to wit”* [“we want you to know”, R.S.V.]—

The Apostle begins an almost abrupt consideration of the Fund. Preliminaries are unnecessary since reference had already been made to it in the First Epistle (1 Cor. 16).

“of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia”—

“Bestowed”, Gk: “didomi”, “to give” (Yg). The “grace” or favour of God relates here to the generosity of the Macedonian ecclesias in giving to Paul when in need at Corinth (11:8, 9), and to the Jerusalem Poor Fund (8:4). Frequently in Scripture exemplary conduct (especially in adversity) is attributed to God’s grace or providence. This is especially so when there is also involved the right **choice** by the recipients. Notice the following:

Nehemiah (Neh. 2:12 cf. 2:5; 4:6 cf. 6:16; 7:5 cf. 6:3);

Hezekiah (2 Chron. 29:36 cf. 29:10).

The ecclesias of Macedonia were located at Thessalonica, Philippi and Berea. The brethren in these ecclesias were Paul’s “crown of rejoicing” in the Lord (1 Thess. 2:19). He joyfully anticipated “wearing” his converts as a “stephanos”—(the coronal wreath given to victors in the track and field competitions) into the Kingdom of God.

8:2 *“How that in a great trial of affliction”*—

“Trial” = “severe test”, R.S.V. “Affliction” = “pressure” (Yg). Affliction accompanied the early preaching work at Philippi where Paul and his company were beaten by Gentiles and jailed (Acts 16:20-23 cf. 2 Cor. 7:5). Similarly, at Thessalonica the envious Jews incited an uproar among the people (Acts 17:5-10 cf. 1 Thess. 1:6).

“the abundance of their joy”—

This statement presents a paradox from the human point of view. How could a “superabundance of joy” be experienced amidst a “severe trial of affliction” and “extreme poverty”? Only the **spiritual-minded** person with values determined by God’s Word could view the difficulties from such a vantage point. It is the spirit of King David when he dedicated the materials for the temple: “But who am I and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners . . . our days on

the earth are as a shadow . . . O LORD our God, all this store that we have prepared . . . **cometh of thine hand**, and is all thine own.” (1 Chron. 29:14-16). “Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD . . . for all that is in the heaven and the earth is thine . . . Both riches and honour come of thee . . . and in thine hand . . . to give strength unto all.” (1 Chron. 29:9, 11, 12).

“and their deep poverty”—

At the time Paul penned this letter, the whole of Greece except Corinth (and Patrae) were suffering famine conditions.¹ Another difficulty was the Roman seizure of the mines in Macedonia and the imposition of heavy taxation.²

“abounded unto the riches of their liberality”—

“Have overflowed in a wealth of liberality on their part”, R.S.V. “Abounded” = “to be over and above” (Yg). “Liberality” = “unaffectedness, simplicity” (Yg). Despite the difficulty of persecution and famine conditions—**dire poverty**, these brethren had so given themselves to their Lord that when it came to the giving of possessions their contribution was overflowing. Like their messenger, Epaphroditus, they were prepared to “spend and be spent” (Phil. 2:25-30) “looking on the things of others” not only on their own interests (Phil. 2:4).

On two occasions the Macedonians contributed to Paul’s needs, at Thessalonica (Phil. 4:15, 16) and even at Corinth itself (2 Cor. 11:8, 9).

8:3 *“For to [their] power, I bear record, yea and beyond [their] power”*—
“Power” = “ability” (Yg). “Bear record” = “to bear testimony or witness” (Yg). “For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means”, R.S.V. The outlook of the Macedonians was **directly** related to their wholesome attitude to the Truth. Paul wrote no warnings against the deceitfulness of riches in his letters to Thessalonica and Philippi. There was no need for such.

“[they were] willing of themselves”—

There was no compulsion in giving from outside pressure.

8:4 *“Praying us with much intreaty”*—

“intreaty”, Gk: “paraklesis”, “a calling for, alongside of” (Yg). “Begging us earnestly” R.S.V. The Macedonians did not wait to be asked to give, rather they begged for the favour of participating, despite their “deep poverty”. What a contrast with the Corinthians! At Corinth, Paul had been accused of acting in a worldly fashion (2 Cor. 1:17; 10:2) and embezzling ecclesial funds (12:16, R.S.V.). His influence among the believers had been eroded and their initial enthusiasm for the Poor Fund had lapsed into disfavour.

“that we would receive”—

There is no counterpart in the Greek text for these words. They are deleted by the R.S.V.; Nestle; Con. Ver.

¹See W. Nicoll (ed.), *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, Vol. III, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903), p. 85, where Arnold’s, *Roman Commonwealth*, ii, 382 is cited as evidence.

²See A. Plummer (ed.), *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges: The 2nd Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, (Cambridge: At the Uni. Press, 1950), p. 76.

“the gift, and [take upon us] the fellowship of the ministering to the saints [‘hagios’]”—

“The gift” = “grace, favour, free gift” (Yg).³ “Fellowship” = “communion” (Yg). “Ministering” = “the service”, Con. Ver. This word is often used for ministering food, money or alms (e.g. ‘ministration’, Acts 6:1; ‘relief’, Acts 11:29; ‘minister’, Rom. 15:25; ‘service’, Rom. 15:31; also 2 Cor. 9:1, 2). Here it is used of the collection for the Jerusalem Poor Fund.

The R.S.V. conveys the intent of the passage: “for the favour of taking part in the relief of the saints”. Nestle conveys the literal meaning: “the grace and fellowship of the ministry to the saints”.

8:5 *“And [this they did] not as we hoped”—*

“hoped” = “expected”, R.S.V. The A.V. “not as we hoped” is misleading. Paul was not disappointed in the Macedonian response. It was rather the converse, the Macedonians had given more than Paul had expected in circumstances of poverty and affliction.

“but first gave their own selves to the Lord and unto us by the will of God”—

“First” means first in point of time and also “first” in importance.⁴

Paul had earlier written to the Roman believers: “I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1). This was really the point of Paul’s appeal to the Corinthians. If they were prepared to really give themselves unstintingly to the Lord, then liberality would flow unsolicited (cf. 2 Cor. 12:14—‘I seek not your’s [i.e. money], but you’).

The Macedonians cared for the Truth and hence their brethren. Their concern was expressed in the ministrations of Epaphroditus who was sick nigh unto death for the work of the Lord. There was also Jason, host to Paul (Acts 17:5-7); Gaius and Aristarchus, travelling companions (Acts 19:29); Sopater of Berea; Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica (Acts 20:4)—ecclesial delegates appointed to accompany Paul with their respective ecclesial contributions to the Jerusalem Poor Fund.

The precedent had been set by the Master “who gave **himself** for our sins” (Gal. 1:4 cf. also 2 Cor. 8:9). All genuine revival of God’s people requires such an outlook (e.g. Ezra 1:3, 4; 7:13, 16).

8:6-8 AN APPEAL FOR CORINTHIAN GENEROSITY AS A TOKEN OF THE GENUINENESS OF THEIR LOVE

8:6 *“Insomuch that we desired Titus that as he had begun”—*

“Desired” = “to call alongside” (Yg); “urged”, R.S.V.; “entreat”, Con. Ver.

Titus had been the bearer of the “Admonitory Letter” to Corinth. The

³“Favour” is undoubtedly the correct translation here as in the R.S.V. (‘Charis’ = ‘favour’ also in Acts 24:27, where ‘to show a pleasure’ = ‘a favour’ cf. Acts 25:3, ‘charis’ = ‘favour’).

⁴J. Lias, (ed.). **The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges: The 2nd Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians**, (Cambridge: At the Uni. Press, 1897), p.85.

work he had begun therefore probably relates to this visit (e.g. 7:6, 13) in which (it may be assumed) he encouraged the Corinthians to revive their interest in the Fund.

Notice the way in which Paul **entreats** Titus—"parakaleo" is used of Paul's instructions to Titus in 8:17; 9:5; 12:18.

"so ['in order that', Nestle] *he would also finish in you the same grace also*"—"He should also complete among you this gracious work", R.S.V. The work was a work of grace since it involved the providential care of God and was nourished by the power of His Word and His vessel, Titus. It was Paul's desire that Titus would encourage the Corinthians to make a generous response so that a significant contribution could be taken to Jerusalem.

8:7 "*Therefore, as ye abound in every [thing]*"—

"Therefore" = "but, except, unless" (Yg); "now", R.S.V. Paul is not making a deduction as "therefore", A.V. suggests, but rather is adding a further implication. "Abound" = "excel", R.S.V.; "superabounding", Con. Ver. Paul is almost certainly referring to the Spirit gifts (cf. 'so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift', 1 Cor. 1:7; 12:13).

"[in] *faith*"—

Likely the gift of faith (1 Cor. 12:9), a pre-requisite for performing some miracles (see Matt. 17:20; 1 Cor. 12:9).

"*and utterance*"—

"a word, discourse" (Yg). This probably relates to the Spirit-gifts of wisdom and knowledge. Note the following:

- a) 1 Cor. 1:5—"utterance", Gk: "logos" cf. verse 7 "so that ye come behind in no gift."
- b) 1 Cor. 12:8—"word ['logos'] of wisdom" and "word ['logos'] of knowledge". The R.S.V. translates "logos" in these verses by "utterance".

"*and knowledge*"—

A Spirit gift (1 Cor. 12:8).

"*and [in] all diligence*"—

"haste, speed" (Yg); "earnestness" R.S.V.

The Spirit gifts were given not only to confirm the spoken, (and later) the written word (Mk. 16:20), but also for the "perfecting of the saints, for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12). As such, the gifts were able to assist the brethren at Corinth in all diligence.

"*and [in] your love to us*"—

Paul uses first the Spirit gifts (almost certainly transmitted to the Corinthians by Paul's hands, cf. 1 Cor. 9:2 and 2 Cor. 12:12) and then the newly-won reconciliation (7:7) as a basis from which to implore the Corinthians to revive their concern for the Jerusalem Poor Fund.

“[see] that you abound in this grace also”—

This was a gentle reminder that Paul’s interests were served by the Jerusalem Poor Fund! This is his concern and he desired that it be theirs too!

8:8 *“I speak not by commandment”—*

“I am not saying this as an injunction”, Con Ver.

The A.V. translation is misconstrued by some religionists to argue that Paul was not giving “God-inspired” instruction, but rather merely human advice. To argue such is to miss the whole point, Paul was not going to **order** them to contribute (cf. 1 Cor. 7:6). To do so, would be to vitiate the significance of the giving for the giver. “God loves a **cheerful** giver” (9:7). Paul returns to this very point in the next chapter. “Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion” (9:7, R.S.V.).

“but by occasion of the forwardness of others”—

“Occasion” = “through, by means of” (Yg). “Forwardness” = “speed, haste” (Yg). The “others” almost certainly refers to the Macedonians.

“to prove the sincerity of your love”—

“To prove” = “testing”, Con. Ver. “Sincerity” = “reality”, Nestle; “to prove by the earnestness of others that your love is genuine”, R.S.V. The generous contribution of the Macedonian ecclesias indicated the genuine character of their love. Were the Corinthians now prepared to match their initial enthusiasm (9:2) with performance? Such would indicate not only their love for the Truth, but also their love for Paul.

THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST—RICH, BUT FOR OUR SAKES BECAME POOR

8:9 *“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ”—*

The providing of Jesus was an act of grace by his Father. Likewise, Christ’s willing submission to the divine requirement was a display of grace. “For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many” (Rom. 5:15 cf. Gal. 1:6).

“that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor”—

“Poor” = “impoverished”, Nestle; “poverty”, Con. Ver. The Greek word for “poor”, “ptocheuo” is the same word translated “poverty” in reference to the Macedonians (8:2). Paul’s appeal to the Corinthians sets out two examples for emulation—the Macedonians who gave generously despite their dire poverty and extreme affliction (8:1-8) and the great example of Christ (8:9). Paul structured his argument similarly in Philippians ch. 2. The exhortation “look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things

⁵The aorist in the Greek text requires the “became poor” to relate to a definite period of time as does “became rich”. He “became poor” no doubt, relates to Christ’s submission to death on the cross (e.g. Matt. 26:39).

of others” (Phil. 2:4) is given supporting examples in Christ (2:5-12), Timothy (2:19-22), and Epaphroditus (2:25-30).

This passage is sometimes wrested to support the doctrine that Christ pre-existed as either a “person” within the Godhead (trinitarian view) or as a spirit creature (J. W. view). As such, it is assumed that he was rich, but upon relinquishing his powers at the “incarnation”, he thereby became poor. These interpretations must be rejected for the following reasons:

1. Neither this verse nor the context states **when** Christ was rich. The time must, therefore, be settled from other parts of Scripture. It is a mere assumption to state without proof that the **time** relates to his “incarnation”.
2. What “riches” could a person within the Godhead “leave behind”, and yet still retain a “God-man” status? If during the period of his earthly ministry Jesus was “God-man”, what riches did he relinquish?
3. Christ was “rich” in-so-far as he could have had all the kingdoms of the world (Matt. 4:8). On one occasion they tried to take him by force and make him a king (John 6:15). With the Holy Spirit without measure—the capability to make stones into bread (Matt. 4:3, cf. John 6:26), Christ refused to misuse God’s power to accumulate wealth and power. He took on him the form (semblance, demeanour) of a slave and became obedient to death on the cross (Phil. 2:4-8, R.S.V.). In so doing, Christ provided an example for the Philippians of “looking on the things of others” (Phil. 2:4).

“that ye through his poverty might be rich”—

Obviously the “riches” which are available to believers by the sacrificial work of Christ are not the riches of silver and gold, i.e., money.

Believers are warned against the accumulation of such (e.g. Matt. 6:20, 24; 1 Tim. 6:9-10). The “riches” therefore, can only relate to the blessings of life eternal in the Kingdom Age. What was the poverty endured by Christ? Biblical expressions such as the following give the answer: “Enduring the cross”; “despising the shame”; “enduring such contradiction of sinners against himself” (Heb. 12:2, 3); a “man of sorrows”, and “acquainted with grief”; “wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53:3-7)—by these he became “poor”.

MATCH INITIAL ENTHUSIASM WITH PERFORMANCE

8:10 *“And herein I give [my] advice”—*

“Advice” = “opinion founded upon knowledge” (Yg). See comment on 8:8—Paul was qualified to give his judgment based on enlightenment by God’s Holy Spirit power (2 Cor. 11:6 cf. 2 Cor. 12:11-12) and as a faithful minister (1 Cor. 7:25).

“for this is expedient for you”—

“Expedient” = “to bear together” (Yg); “it is best for you”, R.S.V.

“who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago”—
“to be forward” = “to wish, will” (Yg); “to desire”, R.S.V.

The Corinthians enthusiastically responded to appeals for the Jerusalem Poor Fund and began to collect a year earlier than the Macedonians (9:2). In the 1st epistle Paul had instructed the Corinthians to lay aside as each prospered (every week) so that the collections would not have to be made when he arrived (cf. 1 Cor. 16:1, 2).

8:11 *“Now therefore perform the doing [of it]”*—

“Perform” = “to make an end of, complete” (Yg); “so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have”, R.S.V.

“that as [there was] a readiness to will so [there may be] a performance”—

“Readiness” = “eagerness”, Nestle; Con. Ver. “Will” = “to wish, will, mean” (Yg).

Paul’s advice simply put meant: “match initial enthusiasm with performance”.

“also out of that which ye have”—

Paul did not want in any way to suggest the imposition of a burden. This is part of his tactful appeal. He returns to this point frequently in the verses which follow.

8:12-15 CONTRIBUTION ACCORDING TO MEANS: NONE TO BE BURDENED

8:12 *“For if there be first a willing mind”*—

“Willing mind” = “eagerness”, Nestle; Con. Ver.; “if the readiness is there”, R.S.V. This, of course, was the whole point of Paul’s appeal. If the Corinthians gave themselves first to the Lord the question as to how much money to give to the Poor Fund would be a very secondary matter. Compare Paul’s pointed appeal: “I seek not yours but you . . . I will very gladly spend and be spent for you” (2 Cor. 12:15).

“[it is] accepted according to that a man hath, [and] not according as he hath not”—

Paul is making it clear that he is not appealing for Corinthian assistance while others enjoy ease, nor is the contribution to be an exaction but rather a contribution in proportion to means.

From the Divine point of view, the **amount** of the contribution is not nearly so significant as the **motive** for giving. Paul had earlier stressed this fact: “and though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor . . . and have not charity [‘agape’] it profiteth me nothing”. (1 Cor. 13:3). It is the cheerful giving from a willing mind that pleases God.

8:13 *"For [I mean] not that other men be eased, and ye burdened"—*

"Eased" = "a sending back, release" (Yg); "relief", Nestle.

"Burdened" = "pressure" (Yg); "distress", Nestle; "affliction", Con. Ver.

The collection was not intended to relieve the Judean brethren from earning a living and to burden the Corinthian believers.

8:14 *"But an equality, [that] now at this time your abundance [may be a supply] for their want"—*

"Want" = "deficiency" (Yg); "lack", Nestle.

The appeal was not intended to supply wants, i.e., "desires", but rather deficiencies. Since the Judean brethren were suffering the effects of a dearth (escaped by the Corinthians) it was the responsibility of the Corinthians to assist their needs (not their ease!).

"that their abundance also may be [a supply] for your want: that there may be an equality"—

The Apostle reminds the Corinthians that they might one day need a requital in kind from those whom they assisted, should hardship come upon the region of Achaia.

Elsewhere Paul argued that the Gentile believers had an obligation to contribute materially to their Jewish brethren since Gentiles had reaped such a spiritual harvest from the Jews (Rom. 15:27—the same principle is applied by Paul in his argument for the right of support—1 Cor. 9:11).

Commentators of the Roman Church wrest this passage to refer to a transference of "merits of saints". A cursory examination, however, indicates that the passage relates to the transference of **money** not merits.

8:15 *"As it is written, he that [had gathered] much had nothing over, and he that [had gathered] little had no lack"—*

Paul quotes Exodus 16:18. The passage might be paraphrased as follows: "He that gathered much (more than an omer), got nothing the more (for his labour), and he that gathered little (less than an omer), got nothing the less". Whatever quantity was gathered by an individual Israelite the average allocation of an omer per Israelite was sufficient. This was the Divine provision—all needs were met. The Corinthians could only obtain such an "equality" in the Christ-body by spiritual minds exercised by agape assisting those in need in Judea.

Those in the ecclesia of Israel who gathered more than they could use, found that it went foul and bred worms. What an interesting parallel for avaricious Corinthians to contemplate!

8:16-19 COMMISSIONERS OF THE FUND— TITUS AND LUKE

8:16 *"But thanks [be] to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you"—*

"Earnest care", Gk: "spoude", "haste, speed" (Yg); "diligence", Con. Ver. Titus had the same care for the Corinthians as did Paul. How could Titus re-

tain his freewill if God placed this disposition into his heart? This is a very important point. There are many examples of the same problem in other parts of Scripture. When an individual is mouldable clay in the hands of God, the Almighty will fashion him, earthen vessel though he is, for eternal purposes working through the individual by His Spirit-Word and providence. The converse is also true. For example, God hardened Pharaoh's heart because Pharaoh was not the kind of clay to respond to the Divine moulding (see Rom. 9:17, 18; Exod. 5:2; 8:15, 32).

As Paul put it: ". . . work out **your own** salvation with fear and trembling. For it is **God** which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil. 2:13).

Note the following examples:

Lydia—She was a "worshipper of God" (Acts 16:14), therefore the "Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul", R.S.V.

Judah—It was Hezekiah's declared intention to put Judah right before God: "Now it is in mine heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel . . . My sons, be not now negligent: for the LORD hath chosen you . . ." (2 Chron. 29:10-11). The men of Judah responded, and so the narrative continues: "And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly". (2 Chron. 29:36). "Also in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the LORD." (2 Chron. 30:12).

8:17 *"For indeed he accepted the exhortation"*—

"Exhortation", Gk: "paraklesis", "a calling near or for" (Yg); "beseeching", Nestle; "entreaty", Con. Ver.; "appeal", R.S.V. Titus responded favourably to Paul's appeal to complete the collection for the Jerusalem Poor Fund, (8:6).

"but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you"—

"Forward" = "very earnest", R.S.V. The Greek Text means that he was **habitually** diligent' or as the Con. Ver. translates it: "inherently more diligent". "Being, as he is, very diligent" expresses the sense of the passage.

Titus journeyed to Corinth as a messenger and ambassador of Paul on the delicate undertaking of conveying the "Admonitory Letter" to the ecclesia.

After conveying a generally favourable response of the Corinthian brethren to Paul's "Admonitory Letter", Titus was hastened back to Corinth to further support for the Jerusalem Poor Fund. Paul makes it clear that Titus returned willingly and voluntarily. If this is the character of Titus' regard for the brethren at Corinth, what better ecclesial delegate could be chosen to administer the collection?

8:18 *"And we have sent with him the brother"*—

The identity of "the brother" cannot definitely be proven, but the following evidence suggests that it was Luke the brother of Titus:

⁷See W. Nicoll, (ed.), **The Expositor's Greek Testament**, Vol. III, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903), p.88.

- a) "the brother" = his brother. This translation has the support of the Greek Grammars listed in the footnote.⁸ 2 Cor. 12:18—"I urged Titus to go and sent the brother with him", R.S.V.
- b) The list of the ecclesial delegates (Acts 20:4) to journey with Paul to Jerusalem omits 2 men and 2 ecclesias:

Berea—Sopater
Thessalonica—Aristarchus and Secundus
Derbe—Gaius and Timothy
Asia—Trophimus and Tychicus
Philippi—Luke?
Corinth—Titus?

It is known that both Philippi and Corinth contributed to the Fund (Rom. 15:25, 26).

- c) If Luke is intended by the anonymous expression "the brother", i.e., "his brother", then Paul is following the practice of Luke who did not mention himself except through the pronouns "us" and "we" (cf. Acts 16:10, 11, 12).
- d) Luke omits any reference to Titus in his "Acts of the Apostles". If Titus were a close relative—i.e., Luke's brother, it would account for why neither Luke nor Titus is addressed by name in the history of Acts. Titus' name goes unmentioned for the same reason that Luke omits his own. (Was the same practice followed by John who omits the name of James "the elder"? Both were brothers, the sons of Zebedee).

"whose praise [is] in the gospel throughout all the ecclesias"—

"Praise" = "commendation", (Yg); "is famous", R.S.V.

This description supports the identification of "the brother" with Luke, since he travelled widely with the Apostle Paul.

"In the gospel" may not refer to the written gospel of Luke. Note the R.S.V.: "famous among all the ecclesias for his preaching of the gospel".

8:19 *"And not [that] only, but who was also chosen of the ecclesias"—*

"Chosen" = "to extend the hand (in voting)" (Yg); "elected", Nestle; "appointed", R.S.V. This is an interesting passage which, along with Acts 14:23 gives strong support for the use of the democratic process in ecclesial affairs in the first century.

Luke was a delegate appointed to accompany Paul with the Macedonian collection.⁹ This is indicated by Acts 20:5 where Luke writes: "These [the other delegates] *going before tarried for us* at Troas".

"to travel with us"—

I.e., the other ecclesial delegates, some of whom met at Troas (Acts 20:5). Paul joined the group at Assos (Acts 20:15).

⁸"His brother" is the idiomatic translation. See A. Souter, **Pocket Greek Lexicon**; J. H. Moulton, **Grammar of the Greek New Testament**; A. T. Robertson, **Grammar of the New Testament Greek**.

⁹Since Philippi, a Macedonian ecclesia made a contribution to the Jerusalem Poor Fund (Rom. 15:26), and Luke was a delegate, the connection is obvious—Luke represented Philippi.

“with this grace”—

I.e., the collection for the Fund. It is referred to as a “grace” in vs. 4, 6, 7.

“which is administered by us”—

This work was the result of a special commission given to Paul (Gal. 2:10), and was his “service” for Jerusalem (Rom. 15:31).

“to the glory of the same Lord”—

“Which is being dispensed by us to the glory of the Lord Himself”, Con. Ver.; “for the glory of the Lord”, R.S.V.

Paul makes it clear that he has nothing to gain personally by his service for the Fund. His work is for the glory of the Lord despite what Corinthian detractors had claimed to the contrary (cf. 4:15).

“and [declaration of] your ready mind”—

There is differing manuscript evidence for “your” or “our”.¹⁰ The R.S.V. translates it: “and to show **our** good work”. (The same problem occurs in 7:12; 8:8).

8:20-21 A DELICATE ISSUE— CONCERN FOR IMPLICATIONS

8:20 *“Avoiding this”—*

“To set, place” (Yg); “the metaphor is a naval one, of shifting sail so as to avoid an enemy’s pursuit”.¹¹ The R.S.V. translates it as follows: “We intend that no one should blame us”. Paul’s careful, tactful appeal is once again apparent.

“that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us”—

“Abundance” = “bounty”, Nestle; “liberal gift”, R.S.V. Paul would no doubt already know of the general response of the ecclesias to the appeal for the Fund (cf. 8:1-4).

In view of the delicate reconciliation recently achieved at Corinth and the charges of embezzlement, Paul sets out his concerns carefully so as to avoid any future misconstructions or deliberate falsehoods.

8:21 *“Providing for honest things”¹²—*

“Providing” = “to know or think beforehand” (Yg). “Honest” = “excellent” (Yg); “good things”, Con. Ver.; “we aim at what is honourable”, R.S.V.

¹⁰See J. Lias, (ed). **The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges: 2nd Corinthians**, (Cambridge: At the Uni. Press, 1950), p.82.

¹¹W. Nicoll, (ed.), **The Expositor’s Greek Testament**, Vol. III, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910), p.61.

¹²Paul may be quoting the LXX: “and do thou provide things honest in the sight of the Lord, and of men” (Prov. 3:4).

“not only in the sight of the Lord”—

Paul knew that all things were “naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:13).

“but also in the sight of men”—

This was a most onerous undertaking since Paul’s actions were under the constant scrutiny of wicked men. They plotted to kill him (Acts 23:12-22), abused him over his defects (2 Cor. 10:10) and twisted his words (2 Cor. 1:12-24). In his Epistle to the Romans, Paul instructed the brethren: “Provide things honest in the sight of all men” (Rom. 12:17). See also Col. 4:5; 1 Tim. 3:7; 5:14.

8:22-23 CREDENTIALS OF TITUS— A SERVANT OF TESTED CHARACTER

8:22 *“And we have sent with them our brother”—*

“The brother” could not mean the Apostle’s own brother, since even if he did have a brother to send, to appoint him to such a mission would encourage just those suspicions Paul was seeking to allay. “The brother” must have journeyed with the delegates to Jerusalem. This suggests “our brother” was Tychicus. Consider the evidence:

- a) Tychicus was a delegate (Acts 20:4)
- b) Paul’s comments on Tychicus’ character in the other epistles are similar to his commendation here:
 - i. He was sent by Paul on specific duties (2 Tim. 4:12; Titus 3:12; Col. 4:7, 8)
 - ii. He knew of Paul’s welfare, and was “a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord” (Eph. 6:21); “a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord” (Col. 4:8).

“whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things”—

“Diligent” = “hasty, speedy” (Yg).

“but now much more diligent upon the great confidence which [I have] in you”—

“Because of his [not ‘I’ as in A.V.] great confidence in you”, R.S.V. The fact that the ecclesia has rallied to support Paul had also encouraged Paul’s fellow-workers.

8:23 *“whether [any do enquire] of Titus”—*

“As for Titus”, R.S.V. The character of Titus may have been attacked as was Paul’s. The inference of 12:16-18 is that Paul had been charged with embezzling the Funds through Titus his agent:

“But granting that I myself did not burden you [by insisting on ecclesial support while in Corinth], I was crafty, you say, and got the better of you by guile. Did I take advantage of you through any of those whom I sent to you? I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not act in the same spirit? Did we not take the same steps?” R.S.V.

"[he is] my partner and fellowhelper concerning you"—

"Partner" = "one having in common" (Yg).

"Fellowhelper" = "worker in your service", R.S.V. Titus was not only an esteemed worker in Paul's service, he was a worker for the benefit of the Corinthians.

"or our brethren [be enquired of, they are] the messengers of the ecclesias"—

"Messenger", Gk: "apostolos", "apostle, one sent off" (Yg). The brethren who laboured with Paul were apostles—ones sent by the ecclesias. Paul's travel companions had **ecclesial endorsement**, they were not merely the personal appointment of Paul himself.

8:23 *"[and] the glory of Christ"—*

The messengers of the ecclesias. Since Christ was in them, (cf. Col. 1:27), through the disposition of mind generated by God's revelation, they reflected the glorious ministration of righteousness (2 Cor. 3:9).

8:24 *"Wherefore shew ye to them"—*

"Shew" = "to show clearly or inwardly" (Yg); "display", Con. Ver.

"and before the ecclesias"—

Literally "to the face".

Paul shows evident concern for the standing of the Corinthian ecclesia in the ecclesial world, especially the ecclesias of Macedonia, Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea.

"the proof of your love"—

"Proof" = "declare, evident token" (Stg).

A generous contribution to the Fund would be regarded by other brethren as an indication of the maturity of the Corinthians in their care for **Jewish** believers.

"and of our boasting on your behalf"—

As Paul shows in ch. 9 he had used the initial enthusiasm of the Corinthians to encourage the Macedonians (9:2, 3). Paul had "boasted" of this to the ecclesias in the north.

2 CORINTHIANS 9

THE COLLECTION: NEED FOR SPEEDY COMPLETION

Many readers have puzzled over the opening words of chapter 9 since it begins in such a way as to imply that chapter 8 had not been written. The chapter divisions have tended to create this problem.

A close examination of the structure of chapters 8 and 9 shows that they are complementary. Chapter 8 established the need for Corinthians to contribute to the Fund. Chapter 9 is concerned with the **speed** with which the collections would be completed and with the **motive** behind the giving. As Paul said, it would be superfluous to write to them about the "ministering to the saints". He assumed that they were convinced of the need to do so. The important point was the character of the giving:

"The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (9:6, 7, R.S.V.).

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN:

9: 1- 5 — Directions for the speedy completion of the Fund.

9: 6-10 — An exhortation to give liberally and cheerfully.

9:11-15 — The accomplishments realised in the Fund.

9:1-5 DIRECTIONS FOR THE SPEEDY COMPLETION OF THE FUND

9:1 *"For as touching the ministration to the saints"—*

"Touching" = "about, concerning" (Yg). The ministration was the collection for poor Jews in Jerusalem and Judea.

"it is superfluous for me to write to you"—

"Superfluous" = "abundant" (Yg); i.e., more than enough.

Paul did not have to write to inform them about the Jerusalem Poor Fund. The appeal had already been made in his "First Epistle" (ch. 16). The nature of the appeal had been set out in 2 Cor. 8—none to be burdened, the integrity of the administrators and the rightness of the work. Paul now urges the completion of the collection.

9:2 *"For I know the forwardness of your mind"—*

"Forwardness" = "readiness of mind" (Yg); "eagerness", Nestle. The initial enthusiasm of the Corinthians for the Fund, Paul assumes, will be revived.

“for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia”—

Paul had used the enthusiastic response of the Corinthians to inspire the Macedonians to a similar effort. This inter-ecclesial comparison evidently encouraged the Macedonian response.

The use of the present tense, “I boast of you to them of Macedonia”, shows that Paul is writing from Macedonia.

“that Achaia was ready a year ago”—

Achaia was the province south of Macedonia. There was an ecclesia founded at Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1), as well as in Corinth. Since no delegates represented Athens (although converts had been made there—Acts 17:34), the term probably includes the whole Roman Province comprising the Hellas proper with the adjacent islands.

“Ready” = “has made preparations”, Nestle. This preparation was the subject of Paul’s “boast” to the Macedonians (8:24). The question now was, were the Corinthians prepared to follow through? Would the original intention to give be followed by a generous giving?

“and your zeal hath provoked very many”—

“Provoked = “stirred up”, R.S.V. It is used in a good sense.

The change in the Corinthians’ attitude to Paul himself (7:7) and consequently to the Fund had placed him in an embarrassing position in respect to the Macedonians. Having stirred up the Macedonians, were the Corinthians now going to disgrace Paul?

“Very many” = “majority”, Con. Ver.; “most of them”, R.S.V.

9:3 *“Yet have I sent the brethren”*—

Paul desired the collection to be ready when he arrived—each person setting aside what he could afford on a weekly basis (1 Cor. 16:2). Performance must not fall short of the promise.

“I have sent” is an epistolary aorist as in 8:18, “we have sent with him the brother”. It means, “I am sending” as in the R.S.V.; “I send”, Con. Ver.

“lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf”—

“That in this matter our boast about you may not turn out to be an idle one”, (Weymouth).

“that, as I said, ye may be ready”—

I.e., to have the collection ready to take to Jerusalem.

9:4 *“Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me”*—

“lest haply” = “lest by any way or means” (Yg).

“and find you unprepared”—

“Unprepared” = “are not ready”, R.S.V. I.e., the work of collecting the money is unfinished.

“we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting”—

“Ashamed” = “humiliated”, R.S.V.; “disgraced”, Con. Ver.

9:5 *“Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren”—*

“Thought” = “to lead, account, esteem”. “Exhort”, Gk: “parakaleo”, “to call near” (Yg); “entreat”, Con. Ver.; “urge”, R.S.V.; “beseech”, Nestle.

“The brethren”—i.e., brethren from Macedonia. It is not known for sure who these brethren were, but probably they would be Paul’s travelling companions, Titus, Luke and Tychicus as suggested earlier (cf. 2 Cor. 8:16, 18, 22).

“that they would go before unto you”—

“Go before” = “to go onward, precede” (Stg).

The administering of the Fund by these brethren would ensure no hurried and unsatisfactory collections when Paul arrived. (The fact that Paul sent these brethren ahead of time seems to suggest that the Corinthian ecclesia must have been very large).

“and make up beforehand your bounty”—

“Bounty” = “blessing” (Yg); Nestle. “And arrange beforehand this gift”, R.S.V.

“whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready”—

“Notice” = “to tell or announce beforehand” (Yg).

“Before” = “to call forth to oneself” (Stg). “Afore-promised”, R.V.; “you have promised”, R.S.V.

“as [a matter of] bounty and not as [of] covetousness”—

“Covetousness” = “to wish to have more” (Yg); “exaction”, R.S.V.; “greediness”, Nestle.

The gift was not to appear like a matter of covetous grasping, “not as an exaction” (R.S.V.), but as a willing gift; “greediness”, Nestle.

“The sense seems to be: “Don’t look on this appeal as a self-interested work of mine. It is a blessing both to receivers (and as he is about to show) to givers”.

9:6-10 AN EXHORTATION TO GIVE LIBERALLY AND CHEERFULLY

9:6 *“But this [I say], he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly”—*

Similar words were used in the Epistle to the Galatians:

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” (Gal. 6:7, 8).

“and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully”—

“Bountifully” = “blessing” (Yg).

He who sows blessings will reap blessings. The point of stress is not that a man with \$1000 capability gives \$100, but that a person be generous with what he has to give. This is the lesson of the widow's mite: 'she gave all that she could. Her penny, Jesus said, was "more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For they all contributed out of their abundance: but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living."' (Mark 12:43, 44, R.S.V.).

9:7 *"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart"—*

"Purposeth" = "to take beforehand, determine" (Yg); "chose", Nestle; "purposed", Con. Ver.; "as he has made up his mind", R.S.V.

"[so let him give]; not grudgingly, or of necessity"—

"Grudgingly" = "out of grief" (Yg); "sorrowfully", Con. Ver.; "reluctantly", R.S.V.

"Necessity" = "compulsion", Con. Ver.; R.S.V.

The Law taught the same lesson regarding the year of release: "If there be a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother . . . thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto." (Deut. 15:7, 10; see also the character of giving for the Tabernacle, Exod. 25:2).

"for God loveth a cheerful giver"—

"Cheerful" = "gleeful", Con. Ver. This is probably a quotation from Prov. 22:8, LXX.

The motive in giving is all-important: Paul could not **compel** the Corinthians to give. This would vitiate the significance for the giver—"though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor . . . and have not charity ['agape'] it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. 13:3). A man who morselled out all his possessions to feed the poor, but whose generosity was undertaken to be seen of men—would as far as he is concerned, have undertaken a profitless enterprise (cf. Matt. 6:1).

9:8 *"And God [is] able to make all grace abound toward you"—*

"Able" = "powerful, mighty, strong" (Yg).

"Make" = "to take beforehand, determine" (Yg). This is the same word translated "purposeth" in verse 7.

"Abound" = "to be over and above" (Yg); "provide", R.S.V.; "lavish", Con. Ver.

"that ye, always having all sufficiency in all [things] may abound to every good work"—

This is the lesson of many parts of Scripture, e.g.: Prov. 22:8-9; 11:24-25; 14:31; Lk. 6:32-38.

Note especially:

“He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given him will he pay him again”. (Prov. 19:17).

“He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse”. (Prov. 28:27).

The appeal of the Apostle was amply supported in the Old Testament Scriptures.

9:9 *“As it is written”*—

Two parenthetical verses are now cited by the Apostle as proof that generous giving in the Truth is always rewarded:

“He hath dispersed abroad: he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever [‘aion’]”—

“Dispersed abroad” = “to scatter” (Yg).

“Righteousness” = “rightness, justice” (Yg); “benevolence”, R.S.V. mg.; “almsgiving”, Weymouth.

This is a quotation from Psa. 112:9. The sense seems to be: The good man gives to the poor, but he is not impoverished by his gifts. His righteousness continues for the age. He can go on giving from a constantly replenishing store. This interpretation is supported by the parallel thought of v.3: “Wealth and riches shall be in his house, and his righteousness endureth for ever”.

9:10 *“Now he that ministereth seed to the sower”*—

“Ministereth” = “to supply” (Yg); “supplies”, R.S.V.; “providing”, Nestle.

“both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness”—

Note R.S.V.: “He who supplies seed for the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your resources”.

The Apostle is almost certainly quoting “seed to the sower” from Isa. 55:10; “the fruits of righteousness” seem to allude to Hos. 10:12; Amos 6:12.

The sense of the verse seems to be: the benevolence of God (as demonstrated in both seed-time and harvest) will supply your means for giving and the opportunity, thereby increasing your benevolence.

9:11-15 THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS REALIZED IN THE FUND

9:11 *“Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness”*—

“Bountifulness” = “simplicity” (Yg); “generosity”, Con. Ver.; R.S.V.; “liberality”, Nestle.

The preceding quotation in verses 9 and 10 related primarily to **temporal** blessings. Paul now ensures the **spiritual** application—“enriched in **everything**”!

A great increase in riches and temporal possessions is often a source of trial in the Truth. The danger of selfish luxury rather than generous giving is always present. The disciple should rather strive for “godliness with contentment

which is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6). One only has to think of the examples of Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Uzziah to see the truth of this. The Apostle Paul exhorted the Ephesians to do honest work that they might "be able to give to those in need" (Eph. 4:28, R.S.V.). Quite a different reason for working from those offered in society!

"which causeth through us thanksgiving to God"—

"Causeth" = "to work thoroughly" (Yg); "will produce", R.S.V.

"Such as through our instrumentality brings thanksgiving to God", (Weymouth). Paul is no doubt anticipating his arrival in Jerusalem and the Jewish thanksgiving to God which the proceeds of the Jerusalem Poor Fund would bring.

9:12 *"For the administration of this service"—*

"Administration" = "to minister" (Yg); "render", R.S.V.

"Service", Gk: 'leitourgia'. In the LXX it is used almost exclusively of the ritual and sacrificial services of the Tabernacle and the Temple. Note the repetition of 'leitourgia' in Romans 15:16.

"That I should be the **minister** ['leitourgia'] of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles . . . that the offering up ['sacrificing', mg.] of the Gentiles might be acceptable . . ."

Paul's ministry was the offering up of the Gentiles on the Christ Altar to the God of heaven. The administration of the Jerusalem Poor Fund was part of this "leitourgia"—priestly service.

"not only supplieth the want of the saints"—

"Supplieth" = "to make fully up toward" (Yg), "making up", Nestle; "replenishing", Con. Ver.

"Want" = "what is behind, want, deficiency" (Yg); "things lacking", Nestle. The "wants" of the saints were their basic **needs**. There was no question of the Fund "easing" Jews in Judea and "burdening" Gentiles in Corinth. Paul had already made that clear (8:13).

The Fund was initiated to relieve poor Jews in Jerusalem. The reasons for their poverty are set out earlier in these notes under "The Background to the Jerusalem Poor Fund". Although this was the reason why the Fund was commenced, additional accomplishments are to be noted.

"but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God"—

"And awakens a chorus of thanksgiving to God" (Weymouth). Thanksgiving especially by the Apostle and the Jews in Jerusalem!

9:13 *"Whiles by the experiment of this ministration"—*

"Experiment" = "proof, trying" (Yg); "test", R.S.V.; "proof", Nestle; "testedness", Con. Ver.

"they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ"—

"Professed" = "a saying the same thing" (Yg); "acknowledging", R.S.V.

“Subjection” = “subjection, submission” (Yg); “obedience”, R.S.V.; “submission”, Nestle.

“and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men”—

The brethren in Jerusalem and Judea would have **proof** of the genuineness of Gentile conversion by their obedience to the demands of the Gospel evident in their generous contribution to the Poor Fund. The acceptance of Gentile converts by Jewish believers was the great issue in the years following the Pentecostal lecture by Peter (cf. Acts 15).

The Corinthian response illustrates the words of Jesus: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

9:14 *“And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you”—*

“Long after” = “to desire much or upon” (Yg).

“Exceeding” = “to cast beyond, surpass” (Yg); “transcendent”, Con. Ver.

Such a response which Paul anticipates to the Fund by Judean Jews would amount to a **wholehearted** acceptance of the Gentile believers at Corinth. Since Corinth was the “test” ecclesia—so notorious for typically Gentile problems—immorality, eating of meats offered to idols etc., Jewish acceptance of Corinthian standing in the Faith signalled a total victory for other Gentile ecclesias.

9:15 *“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift”—*

“Unspeakable” = “not led out, inexpressible” (Yg); “indescribable”, Nestle, Con. Ver.

The “gift” is probably the gift of grace manifested in the regeneration of these Gentile believers (cf. Rom. 11:33; Eph. 3:20).

ACCOMPLISHMENTS REALISED IN THE FUND

Verses 9-12 of this chapter provide a most interesting confirmation of the points listed under “The Importance of the Success of the Fund”. These may be summarised as follows:

- a) **Practical**—It would supply the needs—the deficiencies of the poor Jews in Jerusalem and Judea (9:12). This was the initial purpose of the Fund (Acts 11:28-30).
- b) **Spiritual**—It would affect the relationship of the giver of the relief and the recipients of the relief in the following ways:
 - i. It would generate thanksgiving toward God (9:13). How could **Jews** thank God for relief ministered through willing Gentile contributions without also accepting the **Gentile** givers of the contributions?
 - ii. It would result in “others” glorifying God when they saw the genuineness of Gentile conversion to the Truth (9:13). Who might

these "others" be? How Paul, Timothy, Silas, Apollos, Aquila and other workers at Corinth would rejoice! There would no doubt, be sincere Jewish converts, who, despite all attempts to think otherwise, would harbour doubts as to Gentile standing in the Truth. The Corinthian response would allay these doubts and suspicions.

- iii. The fellowship would be strengthened by the very nature of the contributions (9:13). There was a sharing by **all** members of the ecclesias in the collection. Jewish believers were assisted by Gentile believers.
- iv. There would be a genuine acceptance of the givers of the gifts. When Jewish believers "longed after" Gentile believers and prayed for them "because of the surpassing grace in them" (9:14), there could no longer be any question of the genuineness of Gentile conversion. Jewish and Gentile hearts were knitted together in the bonds of the Gospel.

The Jerusalem Poor Fund was not an extra responsibility borne by the Apostle, but which had no relationship to his great commission to preach the Gospel. As this analysis attempted to show, the two were intricately connected. It is for this reason that Paul concluded his appeal to the Corinthians, "Thanks be unto God for his inexpressible gift!" The Jerusalem Poor Fund was part of the Apostle's priestly service as the minister of Jesus so that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:16).

Paul was prepared to die to knit Jewish and Gentile hearts together in the bonds of the Gospel. The Jerusalem Poor Fund provided the means whereby this might be done. Hence Paul's moving plea to the Roman ecclesia:

"Now I beseech you brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God . . ."

(Rom. 15:30-32).